MAN, MYTH & MAGIC

The Illustrated
Encyclopedia
of Mythology, Religion
and the Unknown

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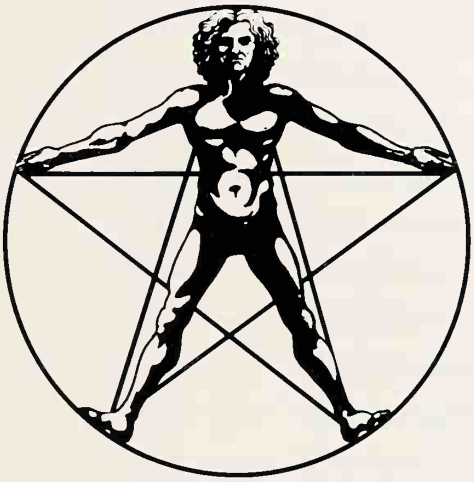

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown

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New Edition edited and compiled by
Richard Cavendish and Brian Innes

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Frontispiece: Ceremonies in which traditional dancing plays a part link the Nazareth Baptist Church with the tribal past. The founder of the movement was in his lifetime deified by his Zulu followers, and his son inherited his claim to messiahship (John Moss)

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MAGICAL PAPYRI

MAGIC AND RELIGION always walked hand-in-hand in ancient Egypt, and are often hard to separate: even in the early hymns and prayers there is evidence of a strong magical element with the underlying purpose of gaining power over the deity for the furtherance of personal ends. Love potions, wax images, talismans and curses were all extremely popular, and it was natural that the Greeks who settled in Egypt in large numbers from the 4th century BC onwards should come under the spell of the ancient traditions of Egypt, and under Egyptian influence in their own approach to religion and magic. The magical papyri are a rich source of material for illustrating the ways in which the Greeks (and later the Romans) in Egypt attempted to combine existing magical practices with elements of their own religion and that of other cultures.

A merchant travelling in Egypt in 1778 was offered a jar, containing 40 or 50 papyri, which was said to have been discovered near ancient Memphis. He bought one of the rolls for a small sum and subsequently took it back to Italy where he presented it to Cardinal Stefano Borgia as a curio. The Danish archeologist Schow has told how he found the papyrus in the Cardinal's museum at Velitri ten years later. Details of the story, including the postscript that the rest of the jar's contents were burned for their pleasant aroma, have been questioned, but the fact remains that the surviving fragment, which became known as the Charta Borgiana, whetted the appetite of scholars, though it contained only a list of workers at Ptolemais Harbour in 192–193 AD.

It was well known that for centuries papyrus had been the staple writing material in Egypt. There were examples in the hieratic script (the simplified cursive form of hieroglyphic) which had survived from earliest times, and the elder Pliny had devoted several chapters of his *Natural History* to a description of the manufacture of papyrus in the Roman period; but, apart from a few references in the works of medieval scholars and humanists to surviving fragments, these were the first discoveries of actual papyri written in Greek.

It was Napoleon's campaigns in Egypt that laid the foundations for more systematic investigations in the 19th century, as a result of which so many Greek papyri were found that the work of deciphering and editing them became sufficiently important to justify the formation of a special branch of classical scholarship known as papyrology (a term first mentioned in 1898). Naturally scholars have paid most attention to the literary discoveries, but a large number of the texts are non-literary, amongst them many magical papyri which cannot fail to be of interest to students of magic, ancient and modern.

In 1928 the first volume of Karl Preisendanz's work *Papyri graecae magicae* appeared, followed by the second volume in 1931 and the third, of which the stock was destroyed by an air raid over Berlin, in 1941. Other special collections of magical papyri are those of Th. Hopfner and S. Eitrem, but many isolated texts have also appeared in the last 20 years or so, which add interesting details to the general picture without invalidating the conclusions that may be drawn from a study of the more comprehensive collections.

The range covered by these texts is a very wide one, extending from the long hymns in verse contained in Preisendanz's first volume (the 'Great Paris Magical Papyrus' has 3274 lines), to brief recipes and imprecations, many of them accompanied by elaborate, if sometimes crude, illustrations. The substantial magical books date from the late 3rd and 5th centuries AD but some of the smaller texts have been placed as early as the 2nd century.

A. D. Nock, in his article on 'Greek Magical Papyri' in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 15 (1929), expressed the opinion that the longer papyri were actual working-copies used by practising magicians 'like the books burnt by St Paul's Ephesian converts . . . or the magical books handed down in Germany from generation to generation.' It is even probable that many of them belonged to the same library. The shorter texts appear to have been extracts from such magical books, supplied on demand to meet specific needs and occasions.

This view is supported by the existence of alternative versions of the same recipes containing variations of method and names, and often described as 'another copy'. For example, in the same text, the 'Great Paris Papyrus', there are two versions of the correct procedure for slandering one's rival to the moon, within 150 lines of each other. The general impression is of professional magicians compiling their handbooks from existing models without worrying too much about coherence or consistency, and selling the required extracts to their customers.

The longer magical papyri were probably textbooks compiled by professional magicians, and the shorter texts may well have been extracts taken from these books and sold to individual clients: part of the *Papyri Osloensis*

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In language and style, as in content, the texts vary greatly, from the poetic to the semi-illiterate. For example, an invocation of Helios, the sun, in the Louvre Papyrus (in Preisendanz's first volume) reads:

> Hither to me, greatest in heaven, for whom the heaven became a dancing-place (magical words followed by a Coptic word), do such and such (magical words), you who are the friend of oracles, golden of countenance, golden-gleaming, shining with fire in the night, mighty mighty lord of the universe, shining forth early in the day, setting in the west of heaven, rising from the east, in form like a circle, running towards midday and passing the time in Arabia (magical words), harbinger of the holy light, circle in fiery form (magical words), brilliant Sun, sending light over the whole world, covering the Ocean (magical words), I pray you by the egg. I am Adam the first born, my name is Adam. . .

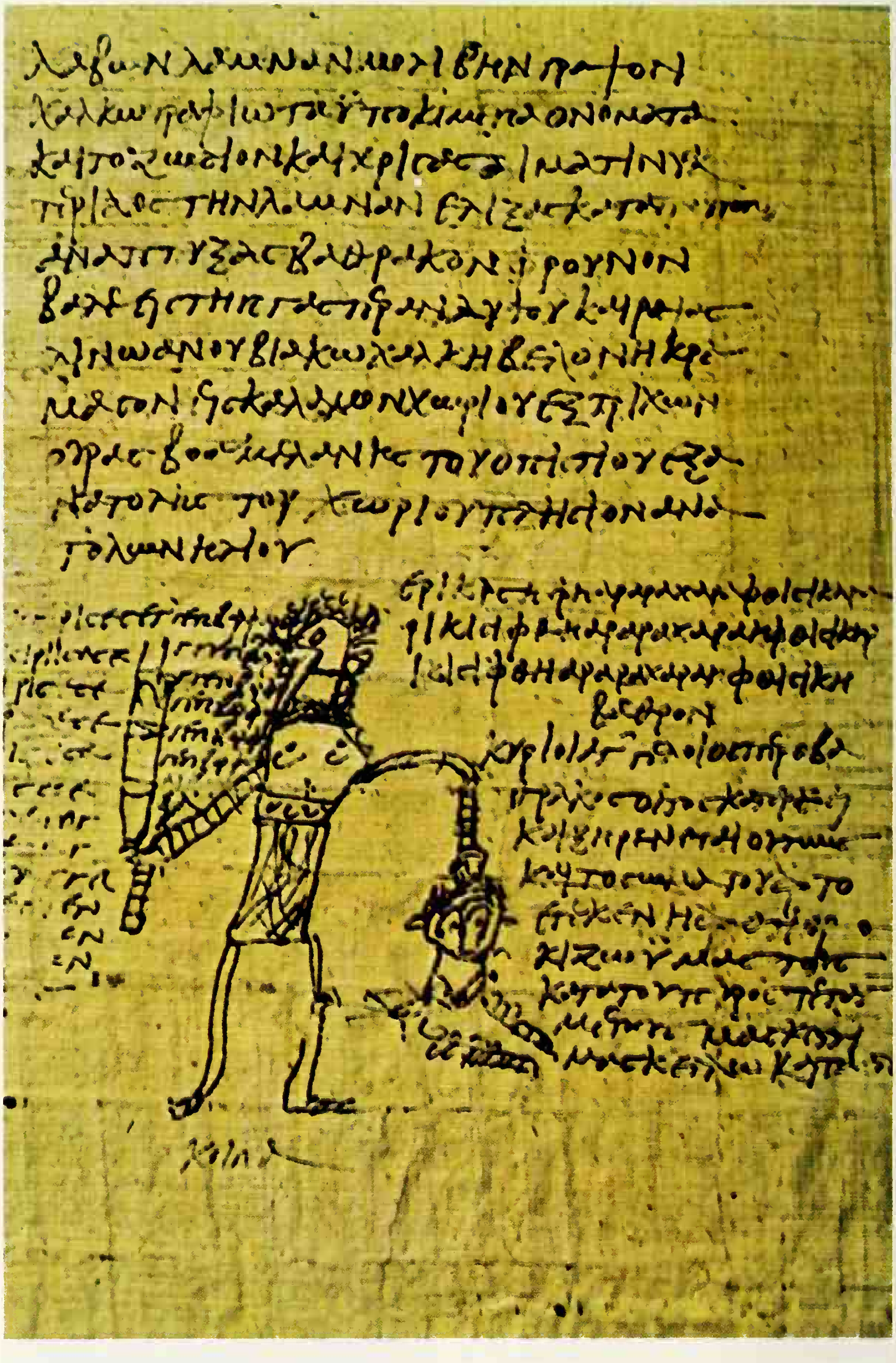
Contrast the lucidity and rhythmical symmetry of this calm invocation with the staccato incoherence of the following extract from a fragment published by A. S. Hunt as 'A Greek Cryptogram' in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* for 1929:

> Adonai (magical word or words), accomplish for (name) what I have written hereon for you, and I will leave the east and west as it was formerly established and will save the flesh of Osiris for ever and will not break through the bonds wherewith you made Typhon fast, and I will not call those who have died violent deaths but let them be, I will not pour out the cedar-oil but will let it be, I will preserve Ammon and will not slay him, I will not scatter the limbs of Osiris, and I will hide you from the giants . . . Eieieieieieieiei choin (followed by several magical words of which only Aoth and Jacob are intelligible). Declare the secrets of Isis . . .

But even this cryptogram retains certain elements of formal style, however crude, when compared with many other texts like, for example, this *agoge* or spell for a lover from Eitrem's *Papyri Osloenses*.

> Write with a bronze stilus on an unbaked potsherd: 'Hecate, you, Hecate, of three shapes, all the magical signs of every one having been completed, I adjure you by the great name of Ablathana and the power of Agramari, for I adjure you, you, who control the fire of the Hawk and those in it, that (feminine name) be consumed, and to pursue (her) to me (masculine name), because I hold in my right hand the two serpents and the victory of Iao Sabaoth, and by the great name Bilkatrimopheche, shaking the fire, Stoutoukatoutou, for her enflamed to love me, in fire for me, yes, tortured. Sunkoutouel am I.' Write 8 magical signs, so; give me the favour of all things, Adonai.

Even this translation conceals the grammatical errors and peculiarities of spelling



which, together with the accumulation of epithets and the use of what are to us meaningless combinations of words and vowels, are the main features of the language and style of popular magical texts on papyrus.

Two further examples from the same papyrus are also worth quoting. A 'remedy to break spells' runs as follows:

> You take (a piece of) lead, and you engrave upon it the figure Mononthoun (?), holding in his right hand a torch, in his left a dagger, and on his head three hawks, and under his feet a scarab, under the scarab a serpent biting its tail. That which is written round the figure is this. (Magical letters and sign follow.)

A curse combines in a most unusual manner all the features that have been mentioned as being typical of these papyri, with universal elements and an invocation of angels:

> You take a plate of lead and write on it with a bronze stilus the following names and the figure. You anoint the plate with the blood of a bat and roll it up in the usual way; you open a frog (toad), and put it (the plate) into its stomach, sew up the frog with Anubis-thread and a bronze needle and suspend it on a reed taken from the spot with hairs from the tail of a black ox with its hind-legs (tied to the reed) in the eastern part of the place near to the rising sun.
>
> Ousirisesengenbarpharanges. (This complex is written in the shape of a heart by cutting off the letters successively from each end.) Erikisephearacharaephthisikera. Rikisephthearacharaephthisiker. Ikisephthearaacharaephthisike. Base. Lord angels, as this frog vanishes away and dries up, so may also the body of (masculine name), born of (feminine name), because I adjure you who are placed to command the fire, Maskelli, Maskello, and the rest . . .

Above all else, the magical papyri, the numerous amulets collected in one volume by C. Bonner, and the charms on lead tablets testify that the syncretism or fusion of different elements characteristic of popular religion from the Hellenistic period onwards, has a prominent place in magical practice. Apart from the traditional Greek deities, of whom Hermes, Hecate-Selen, Apollo-Helios, Aphrodite and Eros are predictably to be found most often (though the last two are not as important for the love charms as one might have expected) there are Egyptian deities like Isis, Osiris, Horus, Anubis and Seth-Typhon, side by side with very strong Semitic, especially Jewish, and other oriental ingredients as well.

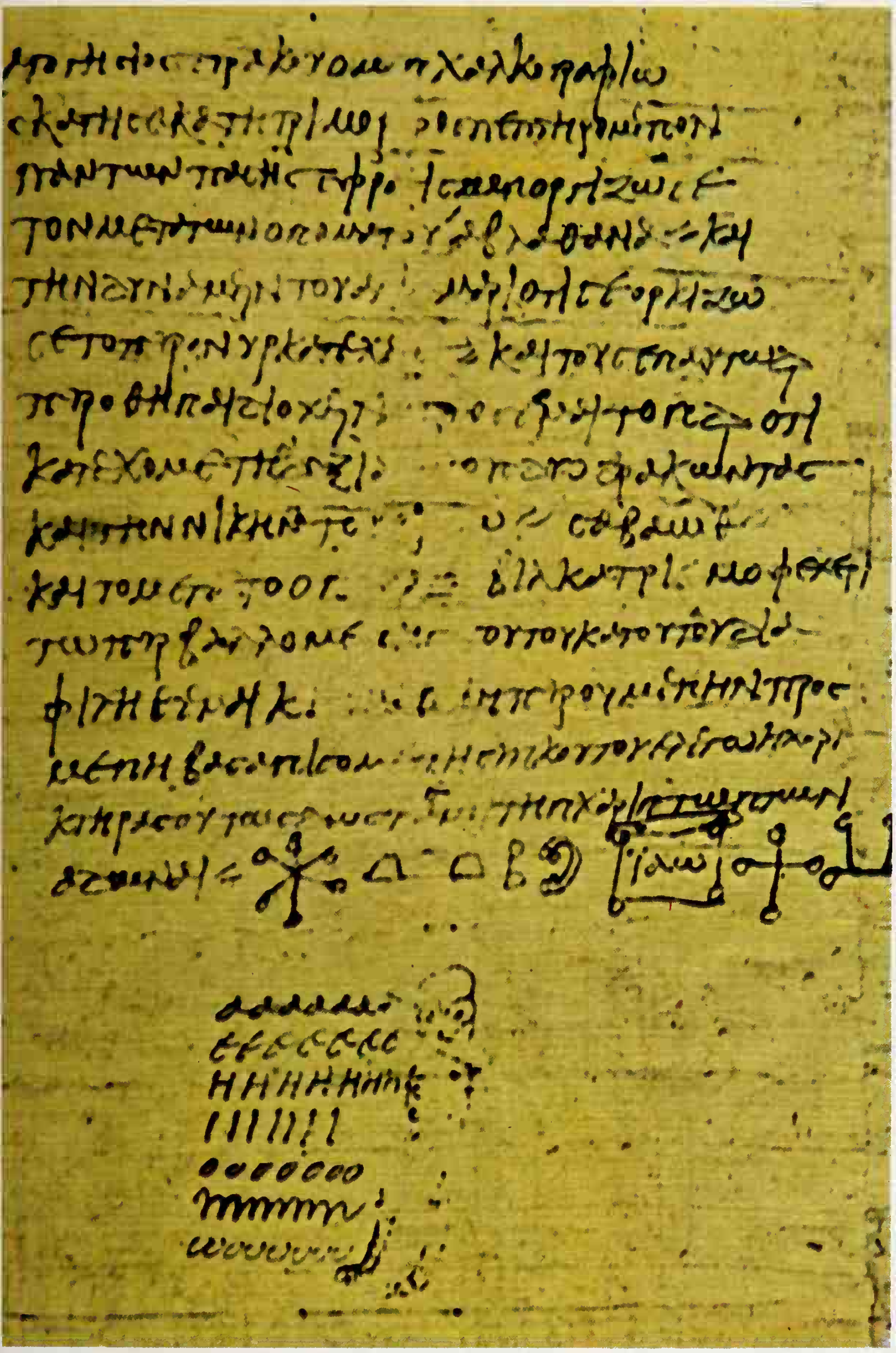
Threatening the Gods

One papyrus, the large Berlin text which opens Preisendanz's work, illustrates the typical mixture with its association within a relatively narrow compass of the names Apollo, Paieon, Iao, Michael, Gabriel, Abrasax, Adonai, Pakenbeth (for Seth-Typhon), Aion, Physis, Adonaios, Eloaios (for Elohim). As H. I. Bell wrote in his *Cults and Creeds:* 'All was fish that came to the magician's net; the more deities he could include in his spells the more likely these were to be effective.'

It is not surprising therefore to find Christian references too, as in this early 4th century Coptic exorcism quoted by Preisendanz: 'Hail, God of Abraham, hail, God of Isaac, hail, God of Jacob, Jesus Christ, Holy Ghost, Son of the Father, who is among the Seven and in the Seven.' Angels, saints, the Virgin Mary, the Holy Ghost, Moses, all appear cheek by jowl, reinforced by citations from psalms, the Lord's Prayer, St Matthew's gospel and the book of Proverbs, to quote a few examples.

But M. P. Nilsson has rightly stressed that the Christian elements were relatively few if one considers that Christianity was the predominant religion of the period. He has explained this paradox as being the result of the natural hostility of Christians to magicians: to the latter Christ was merely one among many powers, to the former he was the most powerful of all mediators, the son of the only true God.

The attitude revealed by the magical papyri is essentially utilitarian. As Nock has picturesquely put it: 'the Gnostics were passionately eager to know how the wheels went round' but 'the authors and readers of the magic papyri desired simply to be able to make them turn'. Their objects were to acquire power and through it to achieve success in love, beauty, popularity, health, wealth, and victory over, or revenge on, an enemy. The means to gain these objects were to hand, if men could but discover the secret of the right approach; and it is a characteristic of these magical papyri, as of Egyptian magic in general, that they threaten deities



The magical papyri illustrate how the Greeks and later the Romans in Egypt attempted to combine current magical practice with elements of their own religion and those of other cultures; by their adaptation of existing religious ideas and forms they claim a place of honour among sources of knowledge of the religion of Graeco-Roman antiquity *Left* and *Far left* Extracts from the *Papyri Osloensis*

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almost as often as they implore them, confronting them with others who may be even more powerful.

Underlying all else, however, there was a deeper concern, also typical of the period, to break the power of destiny, fate or necessity, and this preoccupation led the magicians to use astrology as a means to achieve their ends. There are often signs too of an approach which is closer to that of contemporary mysticism: as the 'Berlin Papyrus' puts it, 'If you have the god for a friend, you will be reverenced as a god yourself.' This mystical piety is best seen in the process called 'introduction to the sun god', which involved winning over the deity as a familiar spirit, a guide and companion to a new spiritual state and the acquisition of new and greater powers of magic.

The magical papyri are full of evidence, if evidence is needed, that religion is a house of many storeys and that, even if magic is the 'disreputable basement', it is not difficult to pass on to higher levels, and back again. Scholars have rightly emphasized the fundamental opposition of magic to true religion in its attitude to the gods but, by their adaptation of current religious ideas and forms, the magical papyri claim a place of honour among our sources of knowledge of the religion of Graeco-Roman antiquity.

B. R. REES

FURTHER READING: H. I. Bell, *Cults and Creeds in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Ares, 1975); C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (University of Michigan Press, 1950); E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California Press, 1951) and *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Norton, 1970); M. P. Nilsson, *Greek Popular Religion* (Columbia University Press, 1940); A. D. Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford University Press, reprint 1961); B. R. Rees, *The Use of Greek* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1960).

MAGIC SQUARES

'NOW THIS TABLE being with a fortunate Saturn, engraven on a plate of lead, helps childbirth; and to make any man safe or powerful; and to cause success of petitions with princes and powers; but if it be done, Saturn being unfortunate, it hinders buildings, planting and the like, and casts a man from honours and dignities, causes discord, quarrelling, and disperses an army.' This comes from Francis Barrett's *The Magus* and the 'table' is the magic square of Saturn.

Numbers and letters are containers of power in magic (see ALPHABET; NUMEROLOGY) and if arranged in a square, and following certain rules, they are believed to make powerful talismans. Barrett's *Magus* and Eliphas Levi's *Transcendental Magic* reproduce the squares of the planets given in Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*. The squares of Saturn and Jupiter are:

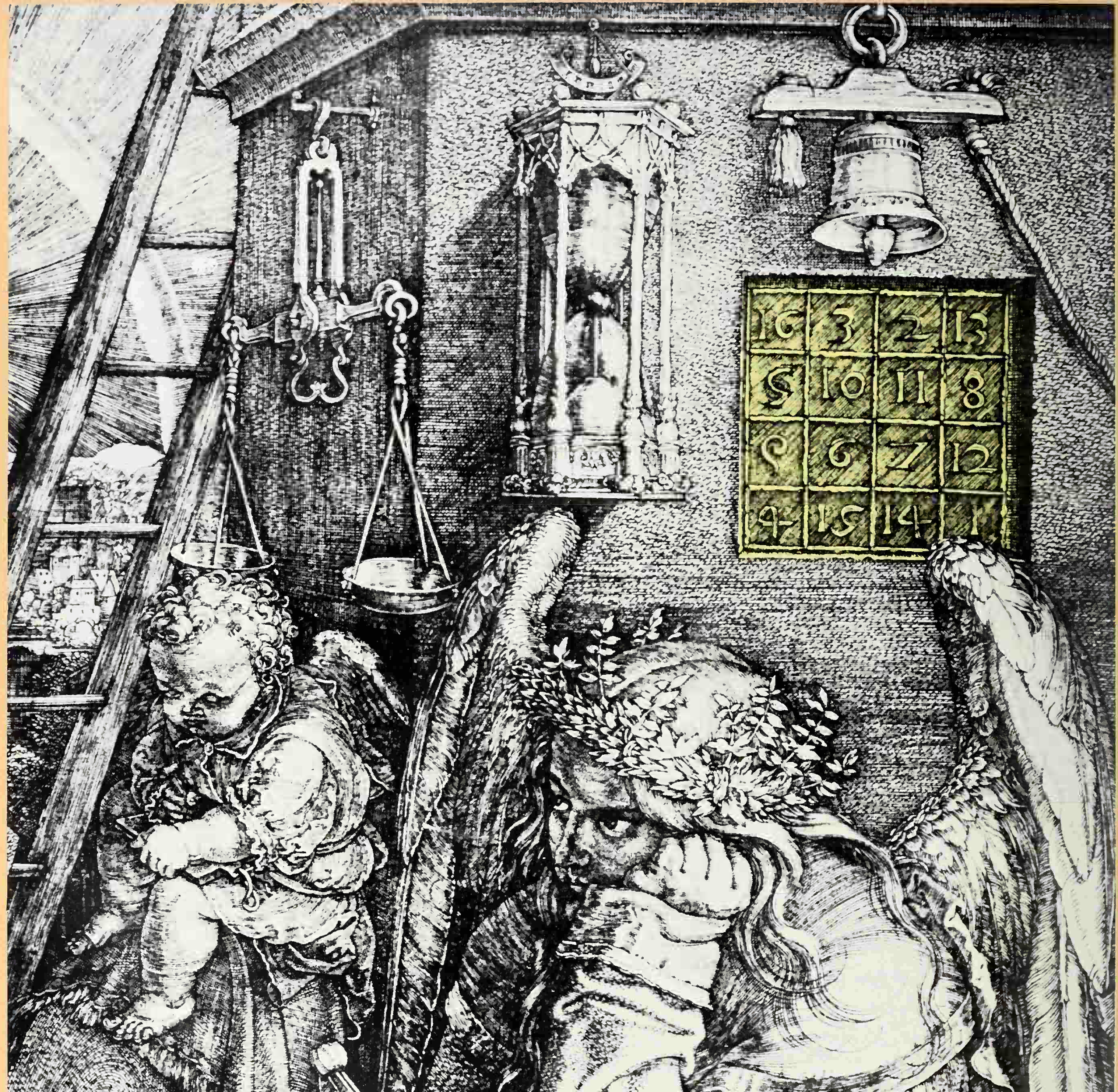
4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

4	14	15	1
9	7	6	12
5	11	10	8
16	2	3	13

In a number square, each number from 1 to the highest number used must appear once, and only once. The vertical and horizontal rows of numbers and the two long diagonals across the square must each add to the same total (15 in the Saturn square, 34 in the Jupiter square). It is the fact that the squares meet these complicated requirements that gives them their magical force.

The Saturn square has 3 rows of 3 figures, and Saturn corresponds to the third sefirah of the Tree of Life, the Jupiter square has 4 rows of 4 figures, and Jupiter corresponds to the fourth sefirah, and similarly with the squares of the remaining planets. Mars has 5 rows (each adding to 65), Venus has 7 (adding to 175), Mercury has 8 (adding to 260) and the moon 9 (adding to 369).

The square of the sun has 6 rows of 6 figures, each row adding to 111, and the total of all the numbers used in the square is 666, the celebrated 'number of the Beast'


16 3 2 13
5 10 11 8
9 6 7 12
4 15 14 1

Numbers arranged in a square according to certain rules are thought to make powerful talismans; the magic square in *Melancolia,* an engraving by Dürer, was believed to have curative properties and was used to treat various diseases (see GREAT BEAST). The deduction which can be drawn from this is that the Beast of Revelation is an aspect of the Sun or life-force, the fierce drive that impels living creatures to survive and procreate. Barrett seems to have had Christ and the Antichrist in mind when he wrote of this square that, engraved on gold when the sun is well-aspected, 'it renders him that wears it renowned, amiable, acceptable, potent in all his works, and equals him to a king, elevating his fortunes, and enabling him to do whatever he will. But with an unfortunate Sun it makes one a tyrant, proud, ambitious, insatiable . . . to come to an ill-ending.'

Magic squares have been used since very early times in China and India, where they are still inscribed on stone or metal and worn for good luck and protection against evil. The Saturn square is the oldest one of its type known, and appears in the *I Ching*. Cabalistic magicians were particularly interested in it because its row-total of 15 equals the first and last letters of the Tetragammaton, the name of God (see NAMES) so that it could be considered an encapsulation of the godhead.

Letters also can make magic squares:

S	A	T	O	R
A	R	E	P	O
T	E	N	E	T
O	P	E	R	A
R	O	T	A	S

S	A	L	O	M
A	R	E	P	O
L	E	M	E	L
O	P	E	R	A
M	O	L	A	S

The square should read the same from the left, from the right, downwards or upwards. The Sator formula is the most famous of all magic squares, found inscribed on old bibles and drinking vessels, and scrawled on fragments from a Roman villa near Cirencester. The *Egyptian Secrets*, a curious hotchpotch of spells and charms falsely attributed to Albertus Magnus, says that a witch cannot stay in the same room with the Sator square, and also recommends it as a cure for colic and as a general protection against plague and sorcery. If written on a wooden plate and thrown into a fire, it was believed to have the power of putting the fire out, and in Saxony in 1742 it was ordered that plates inscribed with the Sator square be kept handy as fire-extinguishers.

Many attempts have been made to translate the Sator square but it is now generally accepted that it is a Christian charm which uses the letters of *Pater noster* and the letters A and O, so that it combines the first two words of the Lord's Prayer with Alpha and Omega, Christ as the first and the last.

The Salom square has the power of causing a girl to fall in love with you, if you touch her bare skin with it. It comes from *The Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*, an 18th century French manuscript edited and translated by MacGregor Mathers (see SACRED MAGIC).

Mathers explained that the words on Abra-Melin's squares 'represent generally the effect to be produced or in other words are simply the Hebrew or other appellations of the result to which the square is to be applied.' But he had little success in translating them and many of them seem to be meaningless. Not all of them even meet the requirement of reading the same in all directions. Other recommended squares are:

K	I	T	T	I	K
I	S	I	A	D	I
T	I	N	N	A	T
T	A	N	N	I	T
I	D	A	I	S	I
K	I	T	T	I	K

A	T	S	A	R	A	H
T	O	A	L	I	S	A
S	A	D	O	R	I	R
A	L	O	T	O	L	A
R	I	R	O	D	A	S
A	S	I	L	A	O	T
H	A	R	A	S	T	A

The Kittik square causes spirits to bring timber for you if you are constructing a mine. The Atsarah square will make you see visions of lakes and rivers.

M	I	L	O	N
I	R	A	G	O
L	A	M	A	L
O	G	A	R	I
N	O	L	I	M

C	A	S	E	D
A	Z	O	T	E
B	O	R	O	S
E	T	O	S	A
D	E	B	A	C

If you write the Milon square on parchment and put it on top of your head, under your hat or cap, the spirits will secretly reveal to you all things past and future. The Cased square is so sinister that we are told, 'This symbol should never be made use of', followed by the instruction to hide it somewhere where the person you wish to harm will pass by. Mathers translated it as: 'overflowing of unrestrained lust' (Cased), 'enduring' (Azote), 'devouring, gluttonous' (Boros), 'idle, useless' (Etosa), 'to overtake and stick close' (Debac).

MAGNETISM

THE CONCEPT OF 'animal magnetism' was developed from about 1766 by F.A. Mesmer (see HYPNOSIS; MESMER) to denote a supposed fluid or force, pervading the universe, but especially concentrated in animal nervous systems and magnets. It was not identical with ordinary 'mineral magnetism', but possessed certain analogies to it.

The general idea was not new, but Mesmer gave it some distinctive twists. He was led to postulate the existence of this fluid by observing that the movements of the planets and other heavenly bodies produced fluctuations in the course of diseases, and that magnets or movements of a therapist's hand over a patient's body ('passes'), or pointing at the body with a hand-held metal rod, might have a strikingly beneficial effect. He thought that the fluid had properties resembling those of ordinary magnetism because it could apparently be stored in objects (particularly glasses or bottles of water) submitted to 'magnetization' and transmitted from these to the bodies of patients; and because it apparently exhibited polarity, some parts of the body, and certain substances, exerting an opposite effect to others.

From Mesmer's arrival in Paris in 1778 until about the year 1850 the 'mesmeric' movement grew and flourished enormously in Europe and, towards the end of the period, in the US and Britain. Most of its supporters adhered to theories resembling Mesmer's, but there were significant developments. The most important of these resulted from a discovery, first made in 1784 by Mesmer's pupil the Marquis de Puységur, that by touching or stroking with the hand it was possible to place susceptible persons in a 'somnambulic' state in which, though showing some of the signs of being asleep, they were unusually responsive to the commands (sometimes the unspoken commands) of the operator.

Puységur accepted Mesmer's theory of a universal fluid (later he laid less stress on its universality) and he compared a healthy man to a vase in contact with an inexhaustible reservoir of fluid. A sick man is someone whose contact with this reservoir has become obstructed, and the magnetist is able to transmit a fresh supply of fluid to him with beneficial results. However, the responsiveness of the somnambulic subject to the operator's wishes shows that the operator must be able to direct the fluid *by his will*.

A view of this general nature was widely accepted by Puységur's contemporaries and immediate successors in the 19th century. Some writers, especially in Germany, where romanticism and nature-philosophy were in the ascendant, took a very exalted view of the supposed fluid. For example, in his influential *Theory of the Science of Spirits* (1808), Dr J.H. Jung-Stilling represented it as a half-way house between spirit and matter, to be equated with the ether of the physicists. He believed that it was especially concentrated in the human organism, and was the medium through which the rational element in man, his 'spirit', could control the body. Disturbances of this ether, such as those produced by a mesmerist, could affect the spirit, perhaps partially freeing it from the body, and so releasing its inherent clairvoyant faculties. Jung-Stilling called the union of a rational element, or spirit, with a particular portion of etheric fluid the 'soul', and it is the soul, not just the spirit, that survives death. Similar doctrines have been propounded by many modern Spiritualists.

It is worth briefly noting the facts, or alleged facts, that convinced not a few intelligent persons of the existence of the magnetic fluid. In addition to the points already touched upon – the alleged cures, the fluid's apparent capacity for storage and transmission, and its supposed tendency to bipolar distribution – five classes of phenomena especially struck the mesmerists.

These were: firstly, the sensations of warmth, pricking, and so on, which were frequently said to follow the 'magnetic passes'; secondly, the way in which the bodies and limbs of certain entranced subjects would sometimes be attracted towards, or repelled from, those of their mesmerists; thirdly (a later development), the supposed fact that if a mesmerist directed a jet of 'magnetic fluid' at the region of his subject's head that was linked by phrenological theory with a certain psychological quality, the subject would respond appropriately (for instance, if the supposed jet of fluid was aimed at the area associated with a sense of humour, he would laugh); fourthly, the taste that could supposedly be detected in magnetized water; and fifthly, the luminous appearances that entranced, and presumably clairvoyant or hypersensitive, subjects claimed to see around magnets, magnetizers and magnetized persons and things, and passing between magnetizers and the objects of their endeavours.

Many people were particularly impressed by these last phenomena, and in the late 1840s their views received a substantial boost from the apparently related findings of a noted Austrian chemist, Baron K. von Reichenbach (1788-1869), whose *Physico-Physiological Researches* was translated into English in 1850.

Reichenbach believed he had shown that certain sensitive persons, especially spontaneous cataleptics and somnambules, could, if kept in the dark for upwards of an hour, perceive characteristic lights emanating from magnets, crystals, metals, the human body, stars, planets and other objects; and could also feel sensations of heat or cold in connection with these lights. To account for these phenomena, Reichenbach postulated a quasi-magnetic emanation or fluid, which he called 'Od'. He conceived it to radiate outwards, but in very different degrees, from all objects and also to be generated by heat, light, electricity, friction and all kinds of chemical change. Od exhibits polarity. The negative pole of a magnet appears blue, and induces a feeling of coldness, while the positive pole appears red and causes a feeling of warmth. The right hand is odically negative and the left positive, the sun negative and the moon positive. Uncharged bodies can be charged by being brought into contact with a charged body. (See also AURA.)

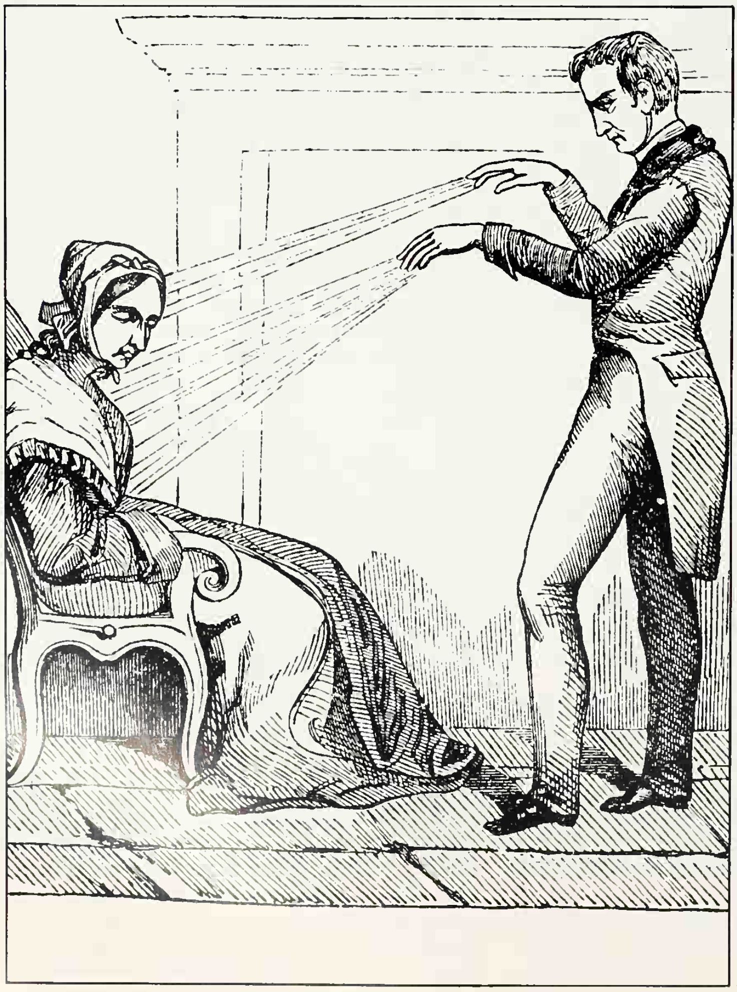
Reichenbach used no mesmeric subjects, and his experiments were conducted over five years with more than 100 persons. His contemporaries were impressed. The obvious similarity of his doctrines to those of the animal magnetists delighted the latter, and induced some sceptics to change their opinions. In his book *Letters on Animal Magnetism* (1851), W. Gregory, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Edinburgh, made an extended attempt to marry the two sets of doctrines, which indeed Reichenbach himself had done up to a point.

Gregory remarks on the similarity of the lights seen by mesmerized persons around magnets, and the hands and persons of their magnetizers, to the lights reported by Reichenbach's subjects. He relates the somnambulic state to Reichenbach's claim that the od of a sleeping person is redistributed away from the head. Perhaps a similar redistribution takes place in somnambules, both natural and mesmeric, the effect of which is to cut off the external senses from their brain centres, while leaving the intellect active. In this state, the somnambule's brain may be sensitive to faint odic radiations from distant objects, radiations which would otherwise be drowned by the influx of ordinary stimulation. Mesmeric clairvoyance may perhaps be explained in this way.

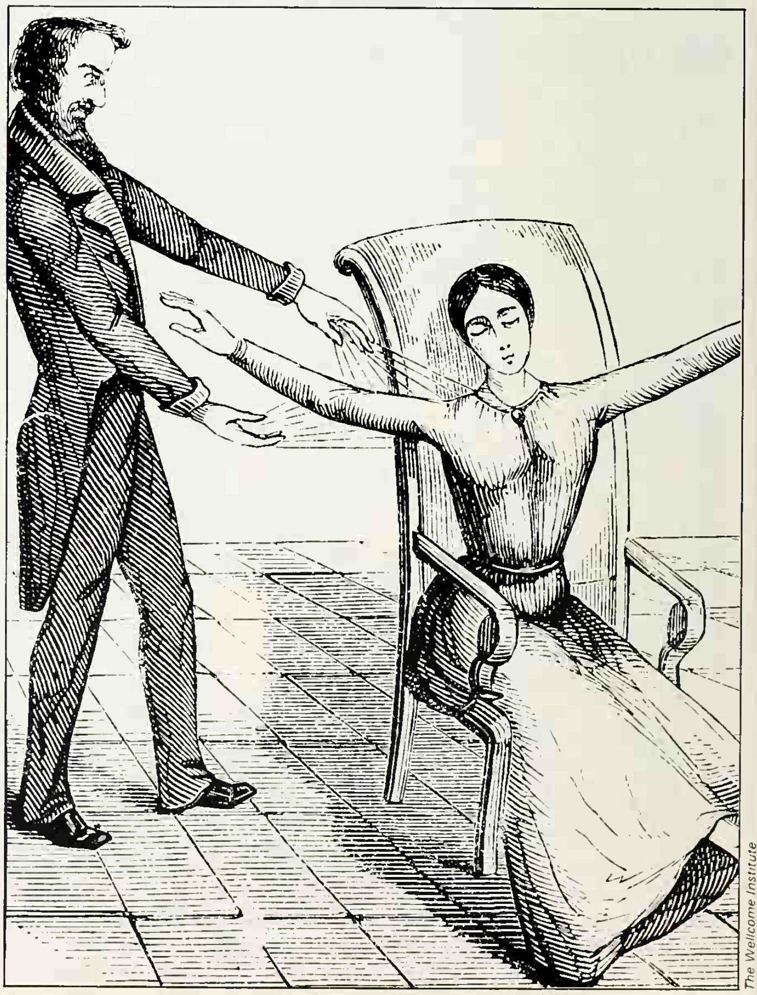
The opponents of animal magnetism had, for the most part, confined themselves to accusing the magnetizers and their subjects of charlatanry, an explanation which was in many cases preposterous. There had, however, always been persons who, while accepting the alleged phenomena, at least in a sense, had sought to explain them in terms of imagination and kindred concepts. Two French Royal Commissions, appointed in 1784 to investigate animal magnetism, reported experiments suggesting that the efficacy of magnetization and of magnetized objects depended entirely upon whether or not the subject believed that an attempt at magnetization was being made, and not at all upon whether this was in fact the case. Similar conclusions were reached in the 1820s by the French physician Alexandre Bertrand, on the basis of his own observations and experiments, and by others later.

The leading French magnetist of the time, J.P.F. Deleuze, replied to Bertrand by citing cases in which sleeping or comatose persons, animals and very young children had

According to the magnetists, a sick person was someone whose contact with the magnetic fluid that fills the universe had been obstructed, and he could be cured if he obtained a fresh supply *Below left* and *Below* Woodcuts showing a mesmeric session in about 1840; it was thought that the operator could transmit the fluid to the subject by using his will *Right* Patients undergo treatment at a 'magnetic dispensary': 18th century etching



The Wellcome Institute



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benefitted or been influenced by magnetic procedures. Such subjects were, Deleuze thought, outside the scope of Bertrand's hypothesis. Unluckily, he gave insufficient details of these cases, and the arguments continued.

Particularly unfortunate for the magnetists was the repetition by James Braid in 1846 of some of Reichenbach's experiments. Braid found that, in repsonse to suggestion, subjects would not only see flames round magnets but would would continue to report them when the magnets, unknown to them, had been removed. Once a subject had understood what was expected, further suggestion was unnecessary, and the character of the hallucinations could be changed by adroit leading questions.

The magnetic movement in Britain and the United States subsided rapidly after the 1850s, not so much, perhaps, because of the critics, as because its impetus and personnel were absorbed into the newly founded Spiritualist movement (see SPIRITUALISM). In France, however, during the later 19th and early 20th centuries, a number of people continued to believe that there was a residue of phenomena not explicable in terms of suggestion, and indicating some kind of emanation from the human organism. However, their numerous experiments upon photographic plates, upon straws and paper cylinders made to rotate by the approach of the hand, and so forth, show little understanding of proper scientific method.

In the 1880s two prominent members of the newly-founded Society for Psychical Research, Edmund Gurney and F.W.H. Myers, found hints of the magnetic effluence in experiments in which a subject's hands were screened from him and one of his fingers would be made immobile and insensitive by the mesmerist's merely pointing at it. It is, however, difficult to feel confident that the subjects could not have picked up small sensory clues.

Recent Experiments

In recent years there has been something of a revival of interest in the possibility that there may be potentially therapeutic emanations from the human body – or, at any rate, from some human bodies. Much of this has been in Russia and Eastern Europe, where unorthodox healers of various categories seem to flourish, and much theoretical speculation has centred round notions of 'bioplasmic bodies' and novel 'energies'.

In China there has been some medical and scientific interest in the ancient branch of medicine known as *chi-gong*. *Chi-gong* practitioners believe in a form of universal energy not unlike the mesmeric fluid (see CHI). As with the latter, good health is dependent upon its proper distribution within the body, and therapeutic practices are directed to that end. Information currently available hardly permits a proper assessment of either Russian or Chinese claims.

In western Europe and the US, a few experimental studies have been undertaken of the alleged powers of healers who operate somewhat in the manner of the old mesmerists. In the 1960s Bernard Grad found, in two experiments with mice, that the near approach of a healer's hands reduced goitres and promoted healing of small skin lesions more effectively than did various kinds of control treatments. Grad is also one of a number of persons who have found, in controlled experiments, that water treated in a quasi-magnetic fashion by a healer assisted the growth of seedlings, or counteracted any deleterious influences, significantly more than did untreated water.

D.P.Wirth carried out experiments on human subjects, in which small skin lesions were treated by the near approach of a healer's hands, the presence of the healer being unknown to the subjects, and the examination of the lesions being carried out by persons unaware whether the subjects belonged to treated or to control groups. The wounds of the treated group healed more quickly than did those of the untreated group.

It is still too early to reach any firm conclusions about experiments such as these, but if they can be repeated, and the findings confirmed, some light may eventually be thrown upon some aspects of the claims made by the animal magnetists.

ALAN GAULD

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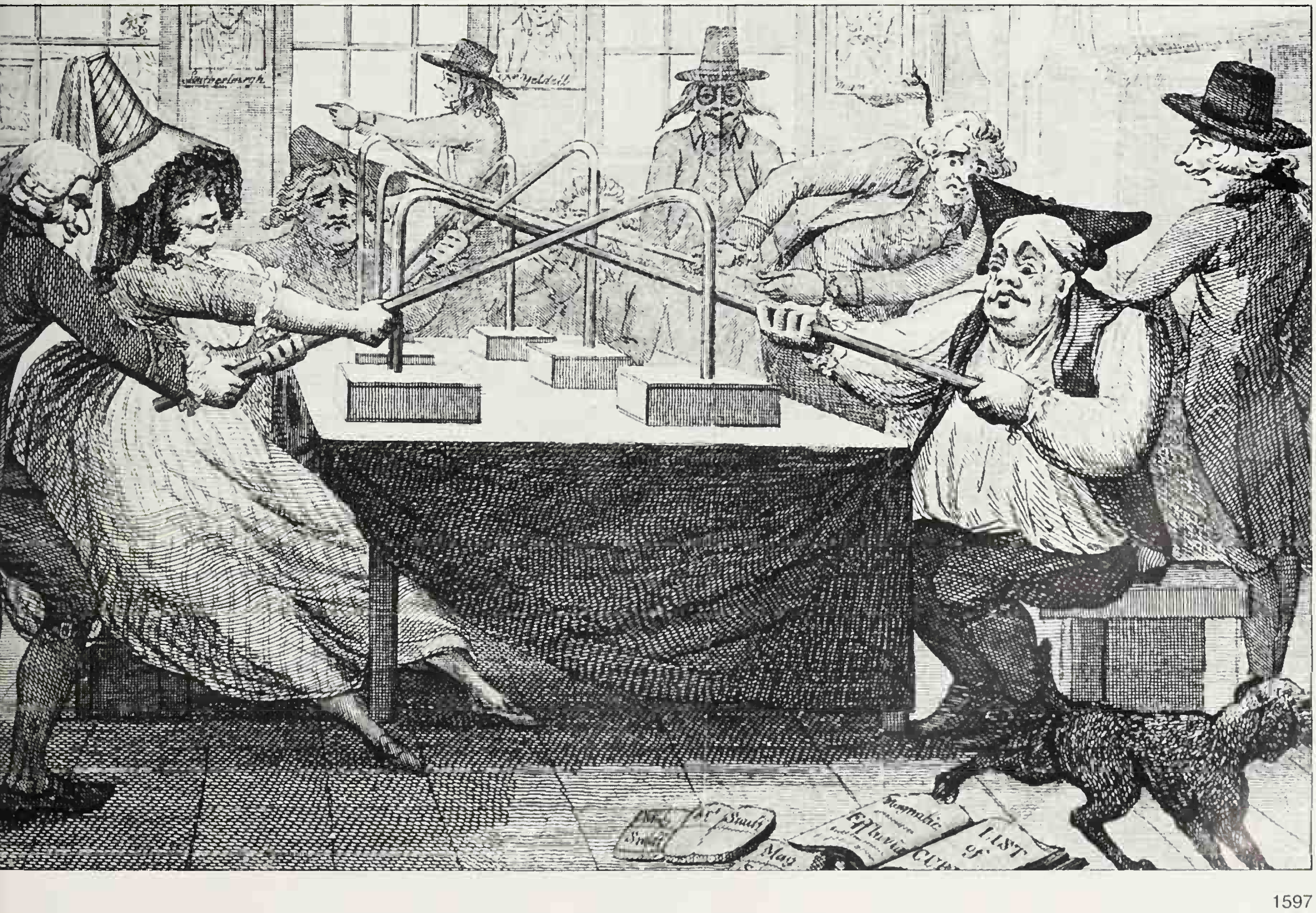

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MAGPIE AND ROOK

ONE OF BRITAIN'S larger birds, the magpie has a loud and raucous voice; it is exceptional in building a large covered nest, from sticks, and its long tail and black-and-white plumage attract attention. It is wary but also bold, and where it is not persecuted the magpie will frequent houses and even nest in cities. There is some evidence that it moved into parts of Europe in comparatively recent times. The European folklore of the magpie is therefore not of very great antiquity.

The magpie's contrasting plumage contributed to its being regarded as a mysterious, sinister and oracular bird. According to a North of England legend, it was a hybrid between the raven and the dove, the two birds released by Noah from the ark, and therefore had not been baptized in the waters of the Flood. In Germany witches were said to ride on magpies or to appear as these birds, and in Sweden there was a saying that in August the magpies go off to draw the Devil's waggons of hay, hence their neck feathers can be seen to have been rubbed by the yoke. In north-east Scotland the magpie was 'the De'il's bird' and was believed to have a drop of Satan's blood on its tongue. It could acquire human speech if its tongue were scratched and a drop of blood from a human tongue inserted.

Such beliefs probably arose from the calls uttered by a party of magpies which sounded, to the imaginative, like human chatter; and from the fact that it had been observed that magpies in captivity are able to imitate words. In Brittany it was said to have seven of the Devil's hairs on its head. Because of the bird's sinister and Satanic associations in many areas, it was considered unlucky to kill a magpie, or thought advisable to do so only during certain periods of the year.

Significant Numbers

These associations gave rise to legends in which the bird was represented as anti-Christian. It was said that unlike other birds it did not go into full mourning after the Crucifixion, hence its black-and-white appearance. In France another legend related that the magpies pricked Christ's feet with thorns while he was on the Cross, but the swallows tried to pull them out, acquiring their blood-red breasts as a result. From this time on the magpies were condemned to nest in tall trees whereas the swallows found shelter under the eaves of houses.

As with many creatures and objects which raise doubts in men's minds because of their behaviour and appearance, the magpie is regarded ambivalently in folklore. It may bring good or bad luck according to circumstances, and in a number of country rhymes one may expect propitious or unfortunate events according to the number of birds seen. One of these rhymes, well known and widespread, is:

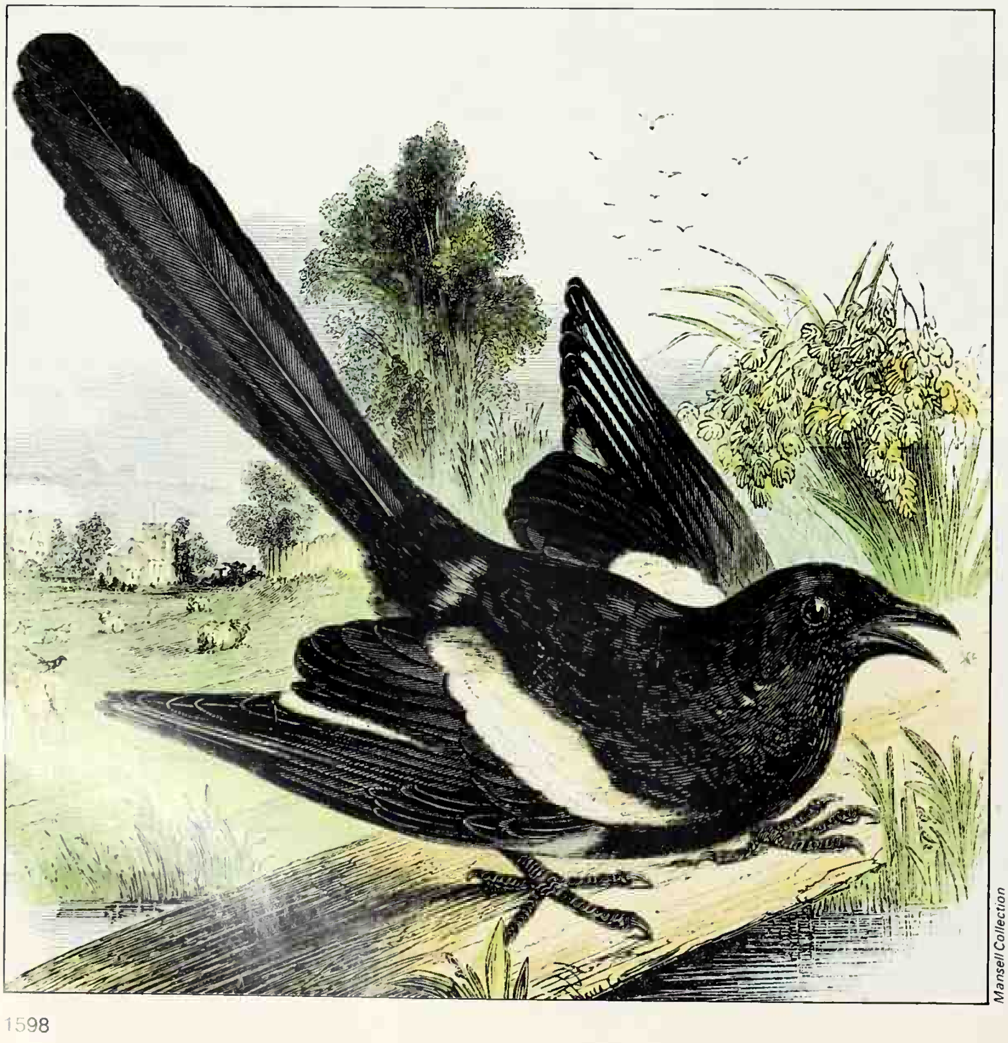
> One for sorrow, two for mirth,
> Three for a wedding, four for a birth.

In South Germany a magpie calling near a house was said to portend disaster, but if it merely chattered the arrival of a guest was expected. English folk also regarded the chattering of magpies as predicting the arrival of strangers.

In Norway a pair of magpies nesting close at hand was believed to bring good luck and Shropshire folk would express a wish when a magpie was seen. A Welsh informant tells me that his father, a distinguished physician, would take off his hat on encountering one of these birds.

Because the magpie makes a massive nest with the entrance at the side, it acquired some of the folklore associated with the woodpecker, as this bird also enters its nest in a tree trunk from the side. In France it was believed that the magpie knew a magical herb which she would apply to any barrier placed across the nest entrance, so causing it to spring away.

The magpie is generally regarded as being mysterious and sinister, partly because of its black-and-white plumage, and in many areas it is thought to have Satanic associations



Mansell Collection

Rooks for a Rainy Day

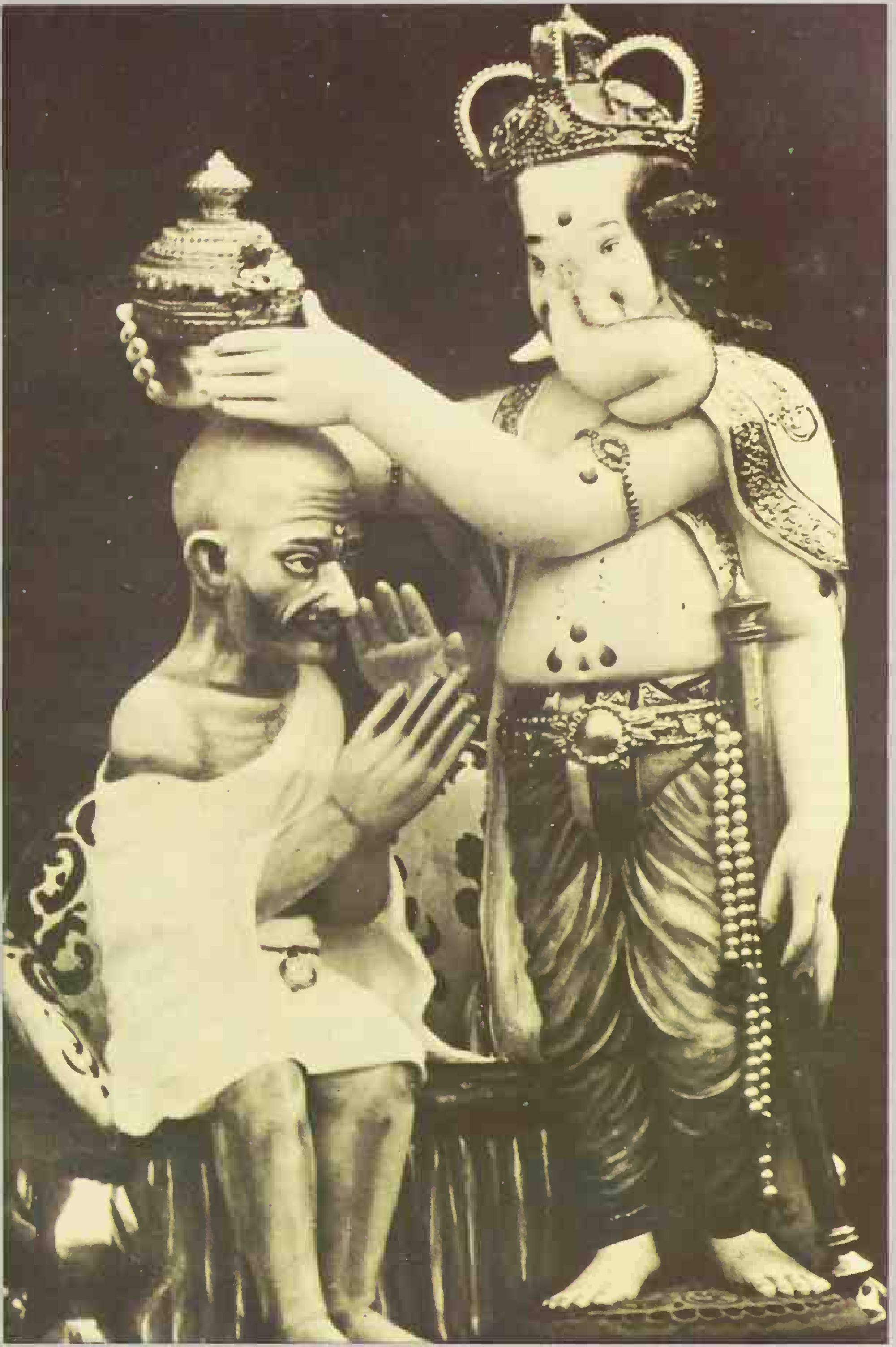
The rook is so common in Britain and rookeries so obvious in the countryside that it is not surprising that considerable lore should be associated with the bird. The traditions and sayings mainly concern inferences to be drawn, and predictions which can be made concerning the weather and human affairs.

In Yorkshire it was believed that when rooks congregated on dead branches there would be rain before night but that if they perched on live branches the day would be fine. In Devonshire it is said that if rooks stay at the rookery or return in the middle of the day there will be rain, and similar beliefs are held elsewhere. There is a basis for these ideas to the extent that rooks cover their chicks when it rains. In the Cambridgeshire fens it is also assumed that if rooks fly far away from their nests in the morning there will be no rain. It is said in this area, and indeed elsewhere, that when they make aerial dives and twists bad weather is on the way.

In Shropshire it was believed that rooks never carry sticks to their nests on Ascension Day but perch quietly without doing any work. There was also a saying that if you did not wear something new on Easter Day the rooks would let fall droppings on your clothes. The association of these birds with religious festivals seems to have been an extension of the idea that because their congregations were so vocal, rooks must have some affinity with human beings.

There was a widespread belief that the desertion of a rookery betokens ill for those on whose land they were established, and another that the birds leave before the downfall of the family owning the estate. It was a fenland tradition that rooks always knew when a gamekeeper had died. They would form into a line and fly over his coffin as it was carried to the church for the funeral.

E. A. ARMSTRONG



Popperfoto

A popular Hindu statuette shows Gandhi being crowned by Ganapati, or Ganesha, the god of good fortune. Gandhi's championship of India's downtrodden masses brought him reverence as a Mahatma, a man who embodies the universal spirit in a specially noble form

Best known for its application to Gandhi, the Hindu title of reverence 'Mahatma' was also used in a particular sense by the founders of the Theosophical Society

MAHATMAS

MAHATMA is a word of Sanskrit derivation, commonly translated 'Great Soul' and used as a title of reverence. But *atman* is not a precise equivalent of 'soul', since it goes outside the individual. In Hinduism the self is usually thought of as a particular manifestation of the universal being, the indwelling spirit of all things, which is one and the same in all, though perceived as many. The atman in a person has this metaphysical reference. It is 'the self as manifesting the Supreme Self' (see BRAHMAN).

A Mahatma is a man whom the Eternal Reality shines through. He embodies the universal spirit in a specially noble and lucid form. He has risen above the mass of humanity but still belongs to it. Holy himself, he is a beacon of hope for his fellow-mortals, a proof that they too can rise higher, in this life or in future lives. His greatness of soul radiates beyond himself.

Mahatmaship is connected with the Hindu idea of *darshan*. The sight or presence of a great man is good in itself, a blessing, a spiritual tonic. This belief is one reason for the tumultuous crowds that press round Indian public heroes, and not only religious heroes. The blessing of darshan can be obtained by coming close to an adored leader such as Jawaharlal Nehru, without his being a saint or even a believer. A Mahatma, however, is the kind of person pre-eminently qualified to dispense it.

In one way or another, the conception transcends normal experience. For the superstitious the true Mahatma is a wonder-worker. Hindus who deny him this superhuman power nevertheless admit that his special quality cannot be pinned down by everyday definitions. A Mahatma is not simply very wise or very philanthropic. He is not necessarily a priest, a monk or a hermit, though lonely asceticism is Hinduism's hallowed path to spiritual heights. Nor need he be a Brahmin. Several of the Great Souls of Hindu tradition are Kshatriyas, members of the warrior caste. Gandhi himself belonged to the merchant caste, a degree lower. Before his own designation as a Mahatma he applied the title to the politician G. K. Gokhale, as a mark of esteem. Hinduism never formally canonizes either the living or the dead. The status of a Mahatma is a matter of acclaim.

Mme Blavatsky's 'Masters'

The Western public was introduced to the word Mahatma by popularizers and interpreters of Asian thought who began to attract notice during the 1870s. Sir Edwin Arnold used it in his translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. But the special meaning which it acquired in the West, and retained for some decades, was due to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–91). With Colonel Olcott, she founded the Theosophical Society, and herself supplied most of its doctrines (see BLAVATSKY).

Mme Blavatsky went to India and enjoyed cordial relations, for a time, with Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, a leader of the reform movement in Hinduism. She was not, however, in any genuine sense his disciple. Instead she claimed to be under the telepathic guidance of certain Mahatmas whose present country of residence was not India. These were adepts or initiates, masters of occult wisdom, who had attained spiritual liberation from the world but stayed below to help mankind. They lived in Tibet, where secret caves housed enormous libraries, and here Mme Blavatsky had met some of them during a mysterious visit.

Her own chief Master was Koot Hoomi, and she had another named Morya. She substantiated their existence with portraits. They appeared to some of her followers and answered letters which she accepted for transmission to them; the answer was in writing and sometimes arrived by 'precipitation', seeming to fall from the air.

Two of the most notable early Theosophists were A. P. Sinnett, editor of the Indian newspaper *The Pioneer*, and A. O. Hume, founder of the Indian National Congress, which later became the party of independence under Gandhi's leadership. Both were prepared to believe but they grew doubtful, and Sinnett tried vainly to reach Koot Hoomi without going through Mme Blavatsky.

The published letters of Koot Hoomi contain nothing to support such an extraordinary authorship. The handwriting, the stationery and some quirks of phrasing and spelling are alleged to point to Mme Blavatsky herself, as the amanuensis if nothing more. There is some evidence, hotly disputed, that she employed pious frauds to buttress her claims in other ways. The 'precipitation' of the letters turned out under scrutiny to be a very dubious process.

Mahatmas in the Theosophical sense were never proved to exist. Mme Blavatsky's ex-mentor Swami Dayananda, who was certainly one of the most authoritative of Hindu spokesmen, declared flatly that they did not.

The Gandhi Cult

Like several other leaders of Indian nationalism, M. K. Gandhi (1869–1948) had links with Theosophy. As a student in London he met Mme Blavatsky shortly before her death in 1891, read her *Key to Theosophy*, and became an associate member of her Society. He went no farther, and his later opinions of Theosophy varied. At one time he called it 'humbug'. At another he praised it for its presentation of the best in Hinduism. But several Theosophists influenced him, and Indian politics brought him into a somewhat stormy relationship with Annie Besant (see BESANT), who presided over Theosophy after the foundress's passing. It does not appear that he took any interest in Mahatmas, of whatever sort. His own application of the title to Gokhale was hardly more than a sincere compliment.

He is said to have been first saluted as a Mahatma himself by Indian admirers during his civil rights campaign in South Africa, which ended in 1914. But the real bestower of the accolade was the poet Rabindranath Tagore, who was his host on his triumphant return to India. Tagore was referring to him as 'Mahatma Gandhi' early in 1915 and wrote of him in a poem as 'the Great Soul in beggar's garb', an allusion to his simplicity of dress. Swami Vivekananda, another leader of Hindu reform, had given currency to the idea that a true Mahatma in 20th century India would be one who championed the downtrodden masses. Gandhi did this a great deal more evidently than other Congress figures. His religious ardour and strict personal morals reinforced the cult which grew round him.

The masses turned to him as a Mahatma long before they knew him as a politician. A campaign in 1917 for the redress of peasant grievances proved his unique, messianic power over them. This made him the irreplaceable leader of the national movement, a position he held for about 15 years. His first bid for Indian self-rule, in 1921, acquired much of its force from the personal mystique. Rumours spread that he would expel the English by magic, and that they could not arrest him because he would simply fly away. When they did arrest him, one of the reasons for the cheerfulness he expressed was that the myth had been exploded. Indians would henceforth be more ready to work out their own salvation, instead of relying on him.

After his release from prison, however, Gandhi still had to endure the importunities of hordes of darshan seekers whenever he travelled. Many literally climbed over him, yelling, jostling and clawing. He was often in need of first aid for scratches on his legs. The superstitious credited him with performing miracles, which he could sometimes refute but not always.

An English observer noticed his dislike of the cult. Gandhi seldom looked sterner than he did when confronting his worshippers. He tried again and again to replace the popular slogan 'Mahatma Gandhi ki-jai' ('Victory to Mahatma Gandhi') with others of a less personal kind. But his attempts to get rid of his unwanted and, in his own view, undeserved title were doomed to failure. Finally he surrendered with a wry humour and a classic comment: 'The woes of Mahatmas are known only to Mahatmas.'

(See also MASTERS.)

GEOFFREY ASHE

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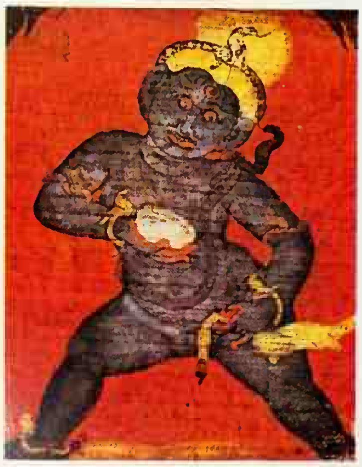
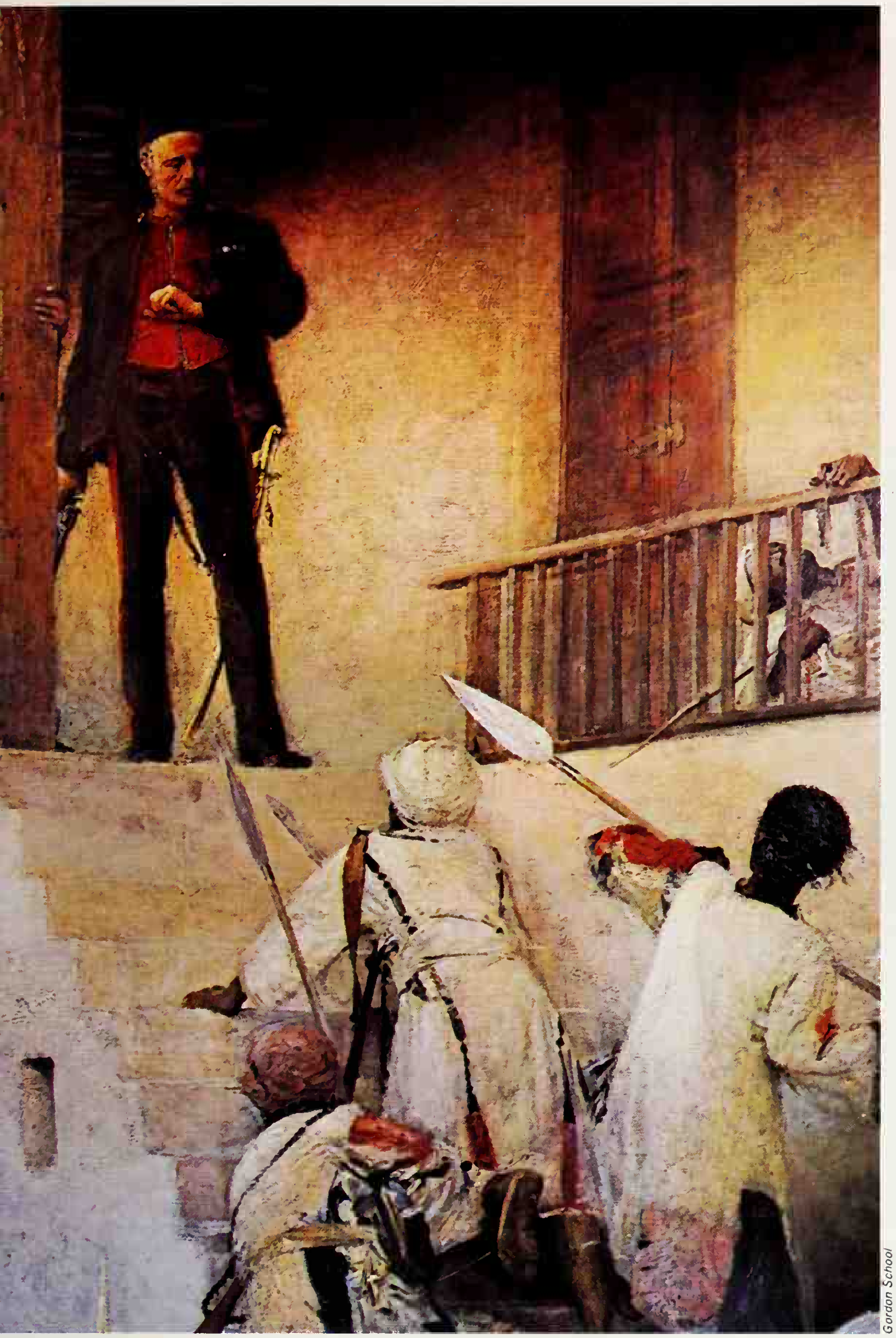
Mahayana

Buddhist movement which arose in about the 1st century AD and became the dominant type of Buddhism in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam; the name means 'great course' or 'great vehicle', as distinct from the Hinayana (lesser course or vehicle) of Sri Lanka and most of Southeast Asia.

See BUDDHISM; JAPAN.



Robert Skelton.



General Gordon meets his end as Khartoum falls to the followers of Mohammed Ahmad al-Sayyid, one of many Messianic leaders to claim the title of Mahdi

Gordon School

In all periods of Moslem history rebels and reformers have claimed to be the Mahdi, the righteous deliverer and descendant of the Prophet who will cleanse the world of wickedness

MAHDI

A SHIITE TRADITION quotes Mohammed as saying, 'I am the Prophet and Ali is my heir, and from us will descend al-Mahdi, the seal (the last) of the imams, who will conquer all religions and take revenge on the wicked.' The idea of the Mahdi, 'he who is rightly guided' (that is, guided by God), first developed among the Shiites, a minority group in Islam, political in origin; they supported the claims of the descendants of Ali, who was the prophet's cousin and was married to his daughter Fatima. Ali, according to Shiite belief, was the first of 12 imams, sinless leaders of the faithful possessed of a divine light. The 12th imam, called the Expected One, was held to have disappeared in about the year 878, but still to be living in hiding, waiting to reveal himself before the Last Day when he would make Islam supreme and abolish wickedness. (See also ISLAM.)

The expectation of the Mahdi, the one who is to appear before the end of the age, has also been prevalent among Sunnites, who constitute the main body of Moslems. In times of trouble the idea of a deliverer to set things right and inaugurate prosperity appealed to the common people. But it is noteworthy that al-Bukhari and Muslim, considered the most reliable compilers of Sunnite tradition, do not mention the Mahdi. They record traditions about Jesus returning and defeating Antichrist. Other compilers relate traditions that Mohammed foretold that the Mahdi, who would bear the same name as his, would make an end of oppression and tyranny, fill the earth with equity and justice, and rule for seven or nine years, during which period he would give anyone who asked as much wealth as he could carry. Jesus is said by them either to descend after the Mahdi and kill Antichrist, or to descend with him and help him to do so.

Numerous Claimants

There have been many claimants to the office of Mahdi, but although Mahdis have risen and passed away, the expectation still remains. Mahdis have appeared in different parts of the Moslem world. For example, there was a claimant in the Yemen in the 12th century who was overthrown by Saladin's brother. In the 17th century in Indonesia a man called Iskandar collected a fleet, proclaimed himself as Mahdi and took to piracy. A few claimants deserve special mention.

In the 1st century of Islam, Mukhtar raised rebellion against the Umayyads, who had monopolized the caliphate, asserting his support of al-Mahdi Mohammed Ibn al-Hanafiyya, a son of Ali by another wife than Fatima. This short-lived rising ended with Mukhtar's death in Kufa in 687. Though this was a Shiite rising, the so-called Mahdi was not a lineal descendant of Mohammed. It is also doubtful whether Ibn al-Hanafiyya really claimed to be the Mahdi.

Ubaydallah, a Shiite claimant of the Ismailite section, who had come from the East to Morocco where he won over the Berber tribe Kitama, began to establish himself as Mahdi in 909. He claimed descent from the Prophet through Ali and Fatima, a claim strongly rejected by his opponents. His career was mainly one of conquest. In Tunisia he founded his capital al-Mahdiyya, and by the time of his death in 933, there had begun a caliphate, known as the Fatimid caliphate, which conquered Egypt and ruled there and in Syria till overthrown by Saladin in 1171.

Ibn Tumart (c 1078–c 1130) appeared as Mahdi in Morocco, claiming descent from Fatima. After studying in the East he returned determined to introduce reformation. His bases were the Koran and Tradition. He taught a strict monotheism, denying that God has attributes. Having won over the Berber tribe Masmuda and announced himself as Mahdi, he had their support in the sacred war *(jihad)* against pagans and against Moslems who rejected his teaching and strict manner of life. The dynasty of the Almohads was established and ruled in Morocco and Spain for over a century.

Mohammed Ali al-Sanusi, who had founded a brotherhood of Sufis (mystics and ascetics – see SUFIS), began in 1840 to spread his propaganda in Libya. After his death in 1859 his son Mohammed al-Mahdi ruled in Libya till his death in 1902, a period of prosperity based on oases and control of caravan routes. He was expected to be the one who would expel foreigners and renew Islam, and some people after 1902 felt that he had not really died.

Holy War in the Sudan

Mohammed Ahmad al-Sayyid (d 1885) arose as Mahdi in the Sudan, founded a Sufi brotherhood and gained great influence by his asceticism, persuasive teaching and sympathy with the sufferings of the poor. In 1881 he announced his divine appointment as Mahdi and defeated various British forces, eventually taking Khartoum in 1885, when General Gordon was killed. Five months later he died in Omdurman. His followers carried on his religious teachings, combining, as is natural in Islam, religion with politics. The Mahdi is still honoured. In 1898 Kitchener ordered his body and tomb to be destroyed, but the tomb was rebuilt and opened in 1947.

In India Ghulam Ahmad declared in 1890 that he was the Mahdi. Other claimants had considered fighting for the faith necessary, but he argued that jihad is a spiritual warfare. This movement has been actively missionary.

There is an expectation among Moslems that God will send a reformer at the beginning of every century; this belief is not necessarily connected with the idea of the Mahdi, but is occasionally associated with it. Ghulam Ahmad, for instance, was welcomed by his followers not merely as Mahdi, but also as coming, according to his claim, in the spirit and power of Jesus, and as the reformer for the beginning of the 14th Moslem century.

(See also MESSIANIC MOVEMENTS.)

JAMES ROBSON

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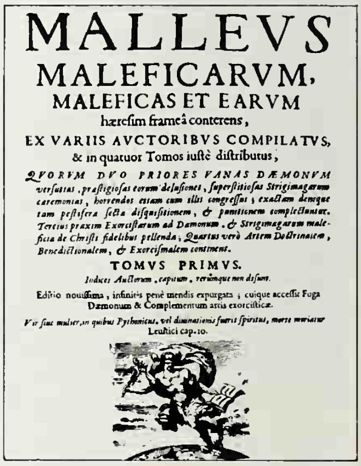
Maize

Or corn, staple food plant of many American Indian peoples, and so an important focus of lore and ritual; often personified as Corn Mother or Corn Maiden, with a myth about her seasonal disappearance and return: the Aztecs had several corn deities for whom rites were performed: corn dances were part of the magic and religion of many North American Indian peoples.

New York State Museum

Malleus Maleficarum

'The Hammer of Witches', written by two German Dominican friars, Jakob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer; first printed in 1486 and frequently republished in the 16th and 17th centuries, it was generally accepted as the most authoritative work on the behaviour of witches and demons, and on the methods of interrogating, torturing and convicting witches; it has been described as 'a perfect armoury of judicial murder'; there is a modern English translation by Montague Summers.



MALLEVS
MALEFICARVM,
MALEFICAS ET EARVM
hæreſim frameâ conterens,
EX VARIIS AVCTORIBVS COMPILATVS,
& in quatuor Tomos iuſtè diſtributus,
QVORVM DVO PRIORES VANAS DÆMONVM verſutias, præſtigioſas eorum deluſiones, ſuperſtitioſas Strigimagarum cæremonias, horrendos etiam cum illis congreſſus; exactam denique tam peſtifera ſecta diſquiſitionem, & punitionem complectuntur. Tertius praxim Exorciſtarum ad Dæmonum, & Strigimagarum maleficia de Chriſti fidelibus pellenda; Quartus verò Artem Doctrinalem, Benedictionalem, & Exorciſmalem continent.
TOMVS PRIMVS.
Indices Auctorum, capitum, rerūmque non deſunt.
Editio nouiſſima, infinitis penè mendis expurgata; cuique acceſſit Fuga Dæmonum & Complementum artis exorciſticæ.
Vir ſiue mulier, in quibus Pythonicus, vel diuinationis fuerit ſpiritus, morte moriatur Leuitici cap. 10.

The great prehistoric temples of Malta, extraordinary feats of engineering, were constructed long before the pyramids of Egypt: their use and purpose is still uncertain

MALTA

RELIGION BELONGS to the world of ideas, but it is difficult to reconstruct past ideas without the help of the written word. There are long periods of human history before the invention of writing which are rich in material remains, yet our interpretations of the religious beliefs behind them cannot be anything more than reasoned, but necessarily unprovable, guesses.

Malta provides a perfect example of this. Through the third millenium BC it supported a rich culture which devoted a great part of its efforts to religion, and of which the remains have survived in great quantity and variety. The temples of Malta were an extraordinary achievement in their art, their architecture and their engineering, at a period well before the pyramids of Egypt. They are built of great blocks of stone, up to 20 tons in weight, but inside were faced with carefully dressed slabs, often tastefully decorated. They are mostly constructed to a standard plan, which was altered slightly with time. First there is a great oval forecourt, sometimes built up from the sloping hillside by means of an impressive terrace. Above the court rises a concave façade consisting of a course of block set on end with their faces exposed, topped by horizontal courses. At the centre is the entrance.

Through this, one enters the long side of a large oval chamber, walled in the same way but much more carefully. The apse formed on either side is usually partly screened off, either by a wall with a restricted doorway or by a row of decorated blocks. Against the walls are often block or slab altars. In the earlier temples, a third apse in the centre opens opposite the entrance, giving a trefoil plan.

Subterranean Mysteries

In a separate category is the Hypogeum of Hal Saflieni. This is a labyrinthine complex of artificially cut caves extending to a depth of 40 feet below the rock surface. The entrance area and the oldest part of the site appears to be a series of burial caves. Beyond and below this is what we can only regard as another temple. Many of its details are meticulous copies of the architectural features of the temples above ground. Others, like the carved ceilings and painted wall decoration, show what has been lost in the surface ruins. One chamber, the Oracle Room, has a deep booming echo. The innermost and deepest parts of the site are great store-rooms. But the site's main purpose was for burial, since the mortal remains of upwards of 6000 individuals were found in the side chambers.

So far, this tells us nothing of the rituals which were performed in these temples. Indeed, we are anticipating in calling them temples at all, though we can immediately add that there was no trace of contemporary domestic occupation found in any of them, nor of human burial except in the Hypogeum. A temple is a building designed for religious rites. What rites?

Clearest is that of animal sacrifice. Large rectangular blocks and three-slab tables can only be altars. Rows of sheep are represented in relief on some of the blocks. Perforations at ground level look like tethering places. Caches of animal bones would seem to be examples of actual offerings. And in one famous altar at Tarxien is a small cupboard which held a long flint knife-blade and the horn of a goat. Other evidence of offerings may, but need not, be associated. Pottery offering bowls, found in their hundreds, always broken, would be more appropriate for fruits or grain than for meat. Holes pierced through the stone paving probably took libations, but whether the offerings were of blood, milk, wine or some other liquid cannot now be determined. Large stone bowls with fire-scorched interiors occupy prominent positions on some sites. The great forecourts suggest ceremonials or processions in front of the temples.

More intriguing is the evidence for some sort of priesthood. The screens and bar-holes are on the inside of the doors, so someone had to remain inside to close them against the general public outside. Then there are the 'oracle holes', apertures up to a foot or so across, connecting the main chambers with the small, and one is tempted to say secret, rooms within the walls. Though we can only guess at what passed through them – confessions and absolutions, offerings and alms, are as likely as oracles – they also imply a public on one side and a restricted, perhaps privileged, group on the other.

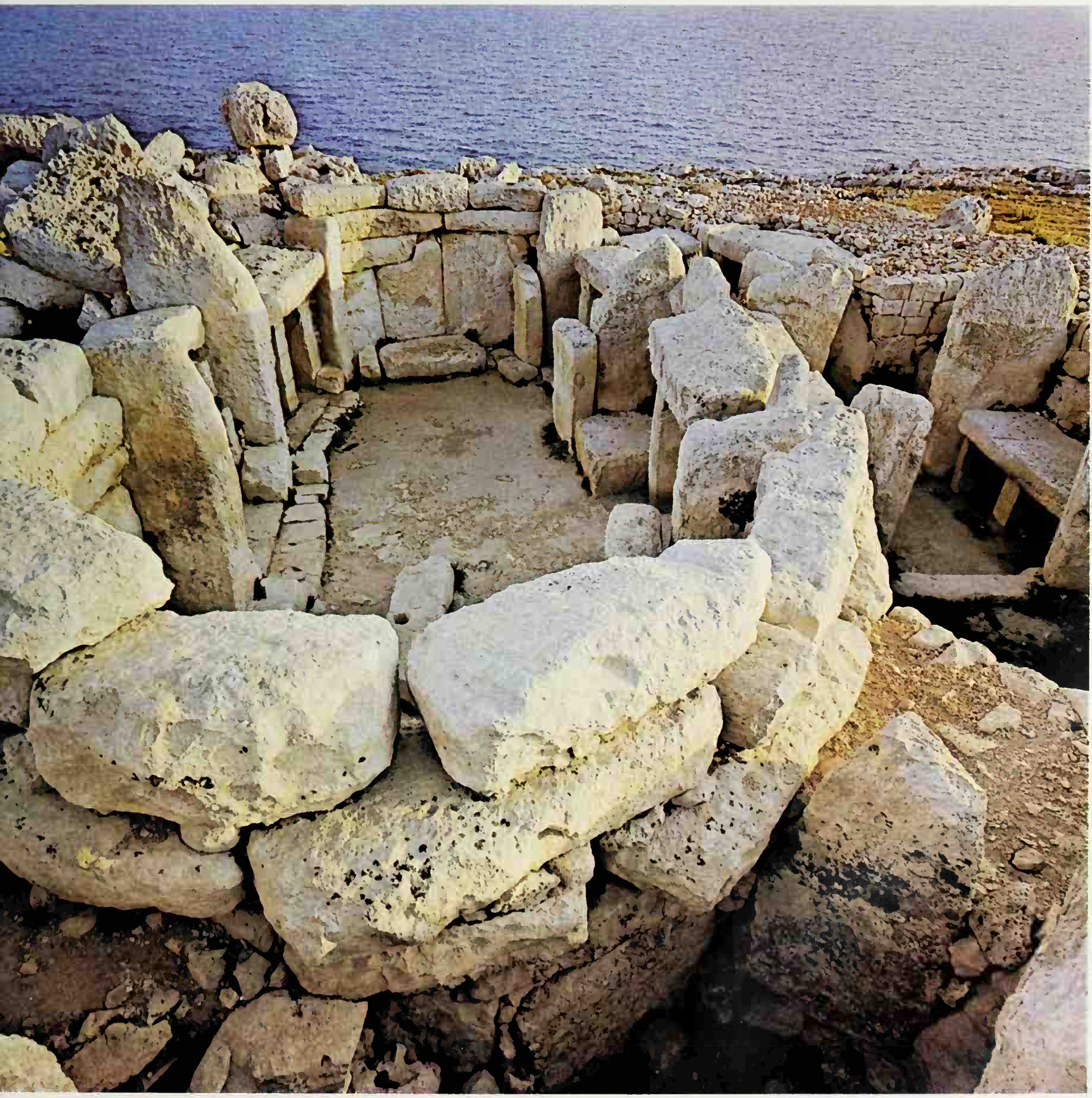
Black or White Magic?

To whom were the temples dedicated? Of the many surviving figures, only one unarguably represents a deity. This is the great stone statue at Tarxien, once about 9 feet high but now destroyed to waist level. It shows an obese standing figure in a pleated skirt, with extraordinary hip measurements, near-spherical calves and tiny feet. There are many smaller statues and figurines in stone and clay of apparently the same divinity, standing or seated. All are oddly sexless. In contrast there are a few obviously female ones, the finest being a beautifully and naturalistically modelled terracotta from the Hagar Qim temple, the so-called Venus of Malta. Only one is considered male, the 'priest' from Tarxien, but there is nothing to prove either his sex or his profession.

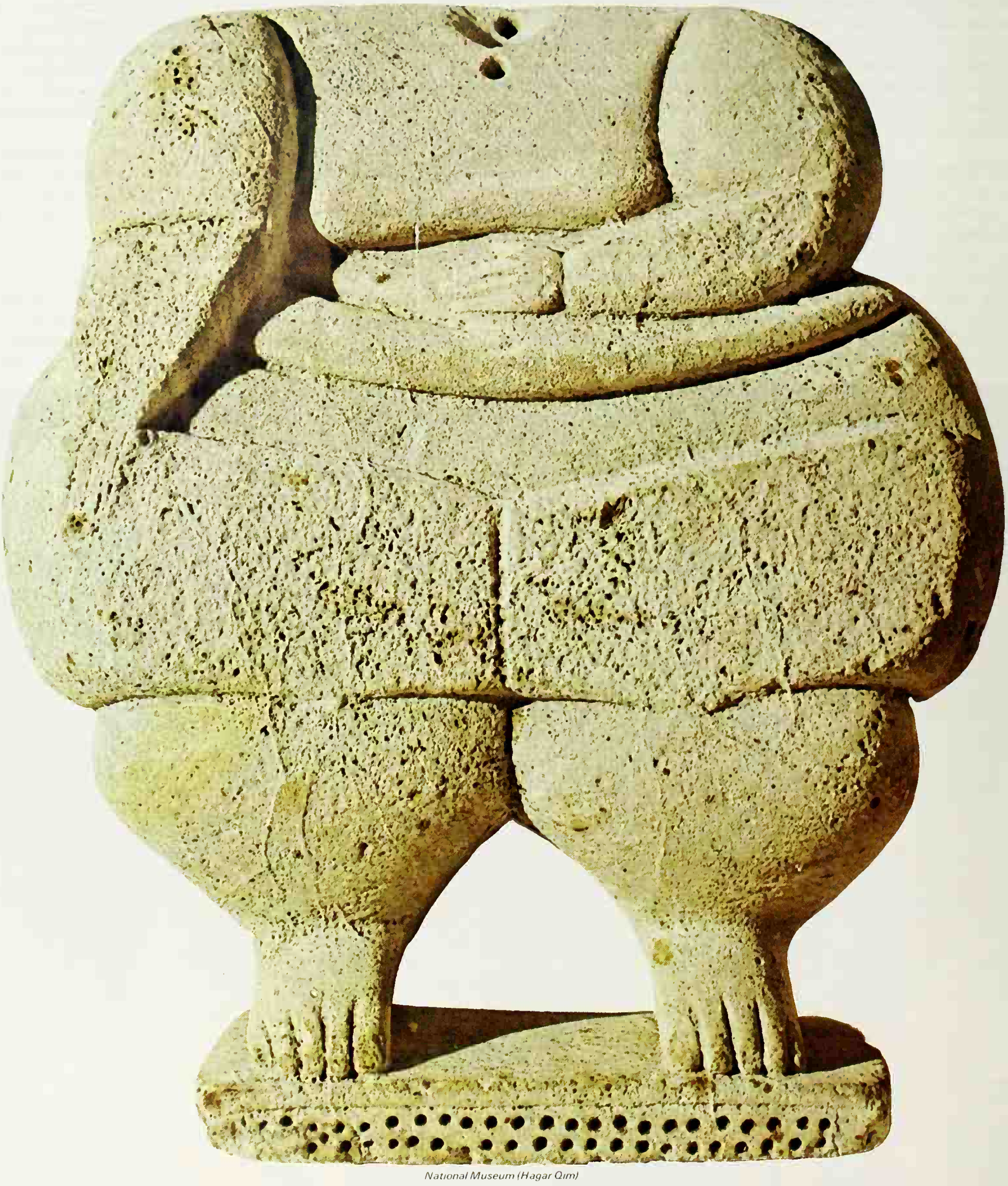
A few of the smallest figurines are different yet again, gross and deformed distortions of the human body. Some could be votive offerings, models of pathological conditions from which a sufferer had recovered or wished to recover. One looks suspiciously like black magic – it is jabbed all over with sharp flint splinters which remain in the wounds.

The temple at Mnajdra, one of the finest of the 30-odd megalithic temples to be found on Malta. All are similar in plan and construction, consisting of intercommunicating oval chambers built of blocks of stone up to 20 tons in weight

A famous terracotta figurine from the depths of the Hypogeum sums up our difficulties. It shows a woman of generous proportions lying on her side on an elegant couch. A cloth or rug is draped closely over her from the navel down. Her hands are beneath her head as if in sleep. Everyone is agreed that this is a highly significant figure, but unfortunately the significance escapes us. We have no way of knowing if she is a worshipper, a priestess or the goddess



Michael Dixon



National Museum (Hagar Qim)

herself. Even more problematical is what she is doing. Is she seeking a cure, for sterility perhaps, by sleeping in a sacred site? Or hoping for a dream in which the future will be revealed to her, or the will of the goddess made known? Or even just sleeping? She may, of course, be sleeping the sleep of death.

We are a little better off when we turn to the nature of this religion. Tentatively we regard the deity as a goddess, the Maltese variant of the Mediterranean Great Mother, but in view of the sexless figures, even this cannot be regarded as anything like certain. Fertility was clearly an important aspect of the religion. The obesity of the figures implies it, and the associated symbolism goes far to prove it. At Tarxien once more, one of the blocks bears relief carvings of a bull and a sow with 14 piglets at suck. Unmistakable carved stone phalli have been found in some numbers.

There also appear to have been close associations with death and the underworld. The snake decorating a block from the Ggantija in Gozo, Malta's sister island, would be entirely appropriate. The libation holes lead down into the earth. A recent suggestion is that the above-ground temples, though not themselves used for burials, were built copies of the rock-cut tombs which took the islands' dead. The Hypogeum offers the strongest argument for this link with the underworld.

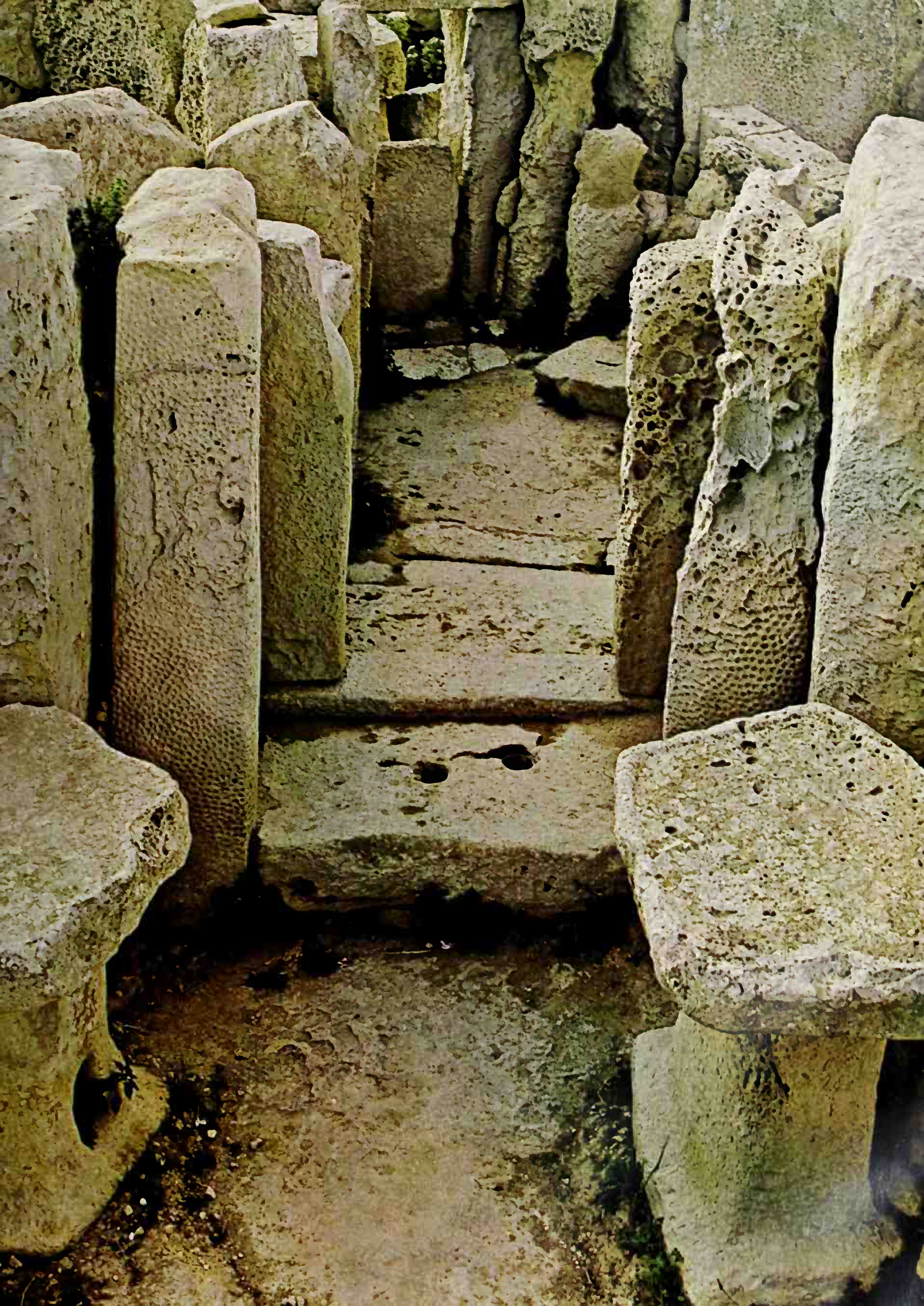
There are hints of other sides to the goddess's powers, such as healing and foretelling the future, and one must not forget that dark suspicion of black magic. Nor can one even guess what others may have left no mark in the material record.

DAVID TRUMP

Above **The so-called Venus of Malta from the temple at Hagar Qim, one of the few statues in female form to be found on the island** ***Right*** **Mushroom-shaped altars, probably used for animal sacrifice, stand before the entrance to inner rooms: part of the temple at Hagar Qim**

Michael Dixon

FURTHER READING: **J.D. Evans, *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands* (Longwood Press, 1971); H. Lewis, *Ancient Malta and Its Antiquities* (Humanities, 1977); S. Rossiter, *Blue Guide to Malta* (Ernest Benn. 1968).**



MAN

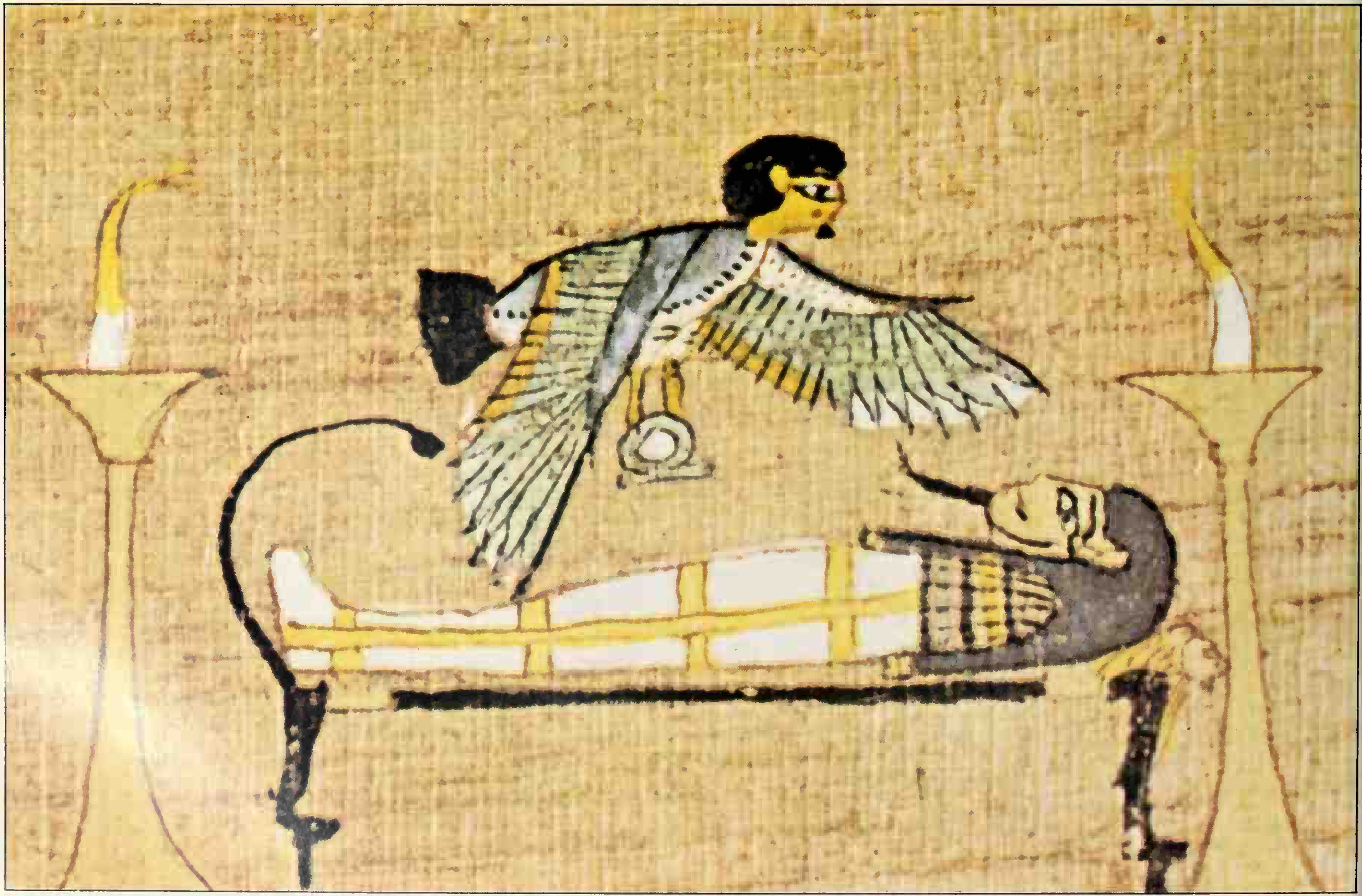
'We must all die, we are like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again': religious, mystical and magical ideas about man's role in the world supply an invaluable insight into the hopes and fears of the human condition

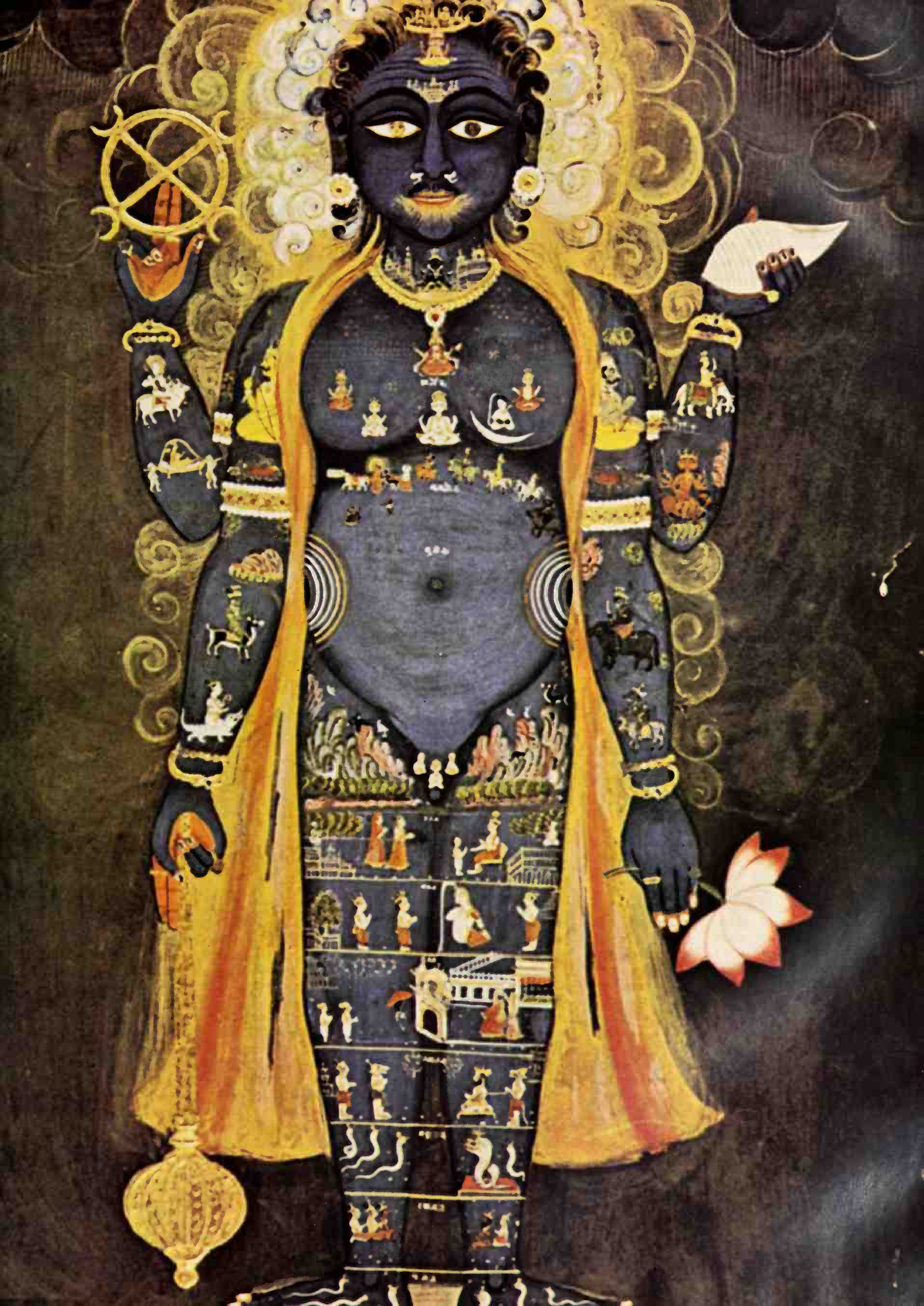
ALL THE MAJOR RELIGIONS are based upon distinctive evaluations of human nature and destiny. In some religions, such as Christianity, this evaluation is consciously formulated into a doctrine of Man; in others it finds expression in ideas and terminologies that are never precisely defined, but clearly incorporate basic assumptions about life. Indeed, on the final analysis, religion itself stems from mankind's endeavour to understand its own reason for existence relative to the universe in which it finds itself placed.

That man, from the very dawn of culture, was able to abstract himself from the business of living and ponder the enigma of human destiny is attested by his burial customs. For the very fact that man has so concerned himself about his dead symbolizes the difference of his attitude to death from that of the other animals, which show no care for their dead (see BURIAL; CULT OF THE DEAD). The earliest known writings certainly show that men must have reflected on human nature and destiny long before they could record their opinions in writing. For these writings, of Egyptian and Sumerian origin and dating from the third millennium BC, reveal a maturity of expression indicative of long established traditions of belief. They also show that the two peoples concerned held very different views about human life in this world and the next.

The Egyptian view of man's nature and destiny, despite its great antiquity, is one of the most complex ever recorded (see EGYPT). One of its most notable characteristics is the preoccupation with death that seems to characterize ancient Egyptian civilization.

Below **To the Egyptians man was a complex mixture of physical and spiritual: the soul, shown as a human-headed bird, hovers above the body** ***Right*** **Vishvarupa, the manifestation of Vishnu in which the Hindu god embodies the whole universe. The conception of the universe, or macrocosm, as a gigantic man also appears in Manicheism, Gnosticism and the Cabala**





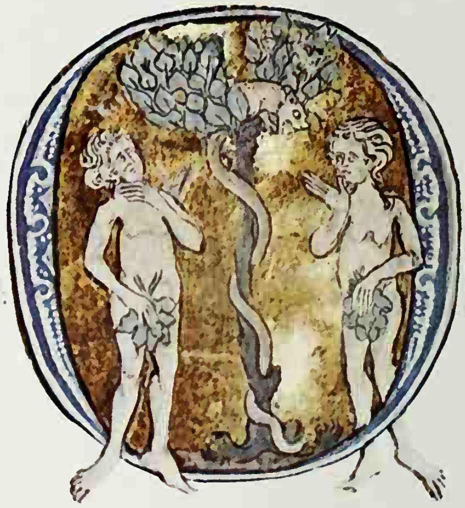
What is Man?

O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is thy name in all the earth! . . .
When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy
fingers,
the moon and the stars which thou hast
established;
what is man that thou art mindful of him,
and the son of man that thou dost care for him?
Yet thou hast made him little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honour.
Thou hast given him dominion over the works
of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet . . .

Psalm 8

Hamlet . . . indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me.

Shakespeare *Hamlet*



Bodleian Library: Colour Filmstrip

This preoccupation was indeed a fact; yet it was not inspired by any innate morbidity of temperament. On the contrary, the Egyptians had a fierce love of life, and it was this love that made them so concerned about death. They were basically optimistic, for despite their profound abhorrence of death, they believed that they had the means, if properly employed, to secure resurrection from death and a happy afterlife (see OSIRIS).

The Egyptians planned for the life after death in a practical manner, as they did for their life in this world. They had a lively apprehension of the perils that faced them after death, particularly of the judgement before Osiris, but these were really incidental, and the wise and prudent would so arrange their affairs that they might safely surmount all obstacles. However, despite this great concern about their eternal destiny, the ancient Egyptians remained curiously unconcerned about the purpose of their existence. Their creation myths almost completely ignore the creation of mankind. In contrast to their Mesopotamian neighbours, they never seem to have asked why their creator gods had made men and women like themselves (see CREATION MYTHS).

The Plague of the Living

The peoples of ancient Mesopotamia took a very different view of human nature and destiny. In one way it was a more thoughtful view, in that they were interested in the purpose of mankind's existence. The explanation given in their mythology was that the gods originally had to labour to provide their own food. Tiring of this obligation, they had created mankind to serve them by building temples and providing sacrifices. However, although the Mesopotamians were concerned to find a divine purpose for the human race, they came to form a most pessimistic estimate of human destiny.

They believed that the gods had intentionally made mankind mortal, so that when they ceased to have any further use for an individual, he died. Death effected an awful change in those who died. For while living, a human being was a kind of psycho-physical organism, being compounded of a material body and an animating principle, called in Akkadian *napistu*. At death this organic whole was irrevocably shattered. What survived, known as the *edim* or *etimmu*, was a horrible daemonic entity that could terribly plague the living, especially if its body were not properly buried. Its everlasting abode was *kur-nu-gi-a*, 'the land of no-return', located far below the earth, where all the dead dwelt, in dust and darkness, with no differentiation between the good and the wicked. There they were ruled by the terrible god Nergal and his grim wife Ereshkigal.

The pessimism of this Mesopotamian view of man's destiny calls for explanation and its likely cause has a great significance for the study of religion. It would seem, on the one hand, to have been based on a realistic estimate of the phenomenon of death as the complete disintegration of the living person. On the other hand, it was inspired by the inability of the unsophisticated mind to conceive of complete personal extinction. Hence the grim belief that something did survive of the former living person, though horribly transformed and so doomed to an existence of unending misery. (See also MESOPOTAMIA.)

This Mesopotamian view of man was not unique in the ancient world; parallels to it are found in ancient Israel and in Greece. The Hebrew estimate is graphically presented in the story of the Fall of Adam. Yahweh, the god of Israel, makes Adam out of clay, and then animates him by breathing 'the breath of life' into his nostrils. Adam thus becomes 'a living soul' (*nephesh*, which is akin to the Babylonian *napistu*). The animals are also described as 'living souls', and are similarly fashioned from clay. After Adam commits his fatal act of disobedience, Yahweh pronounces his doom: 'clay thou art, and unto clay shalt thou return.' Since Adam was the progenitor of mankind, this fate was inherited by all his descendants.

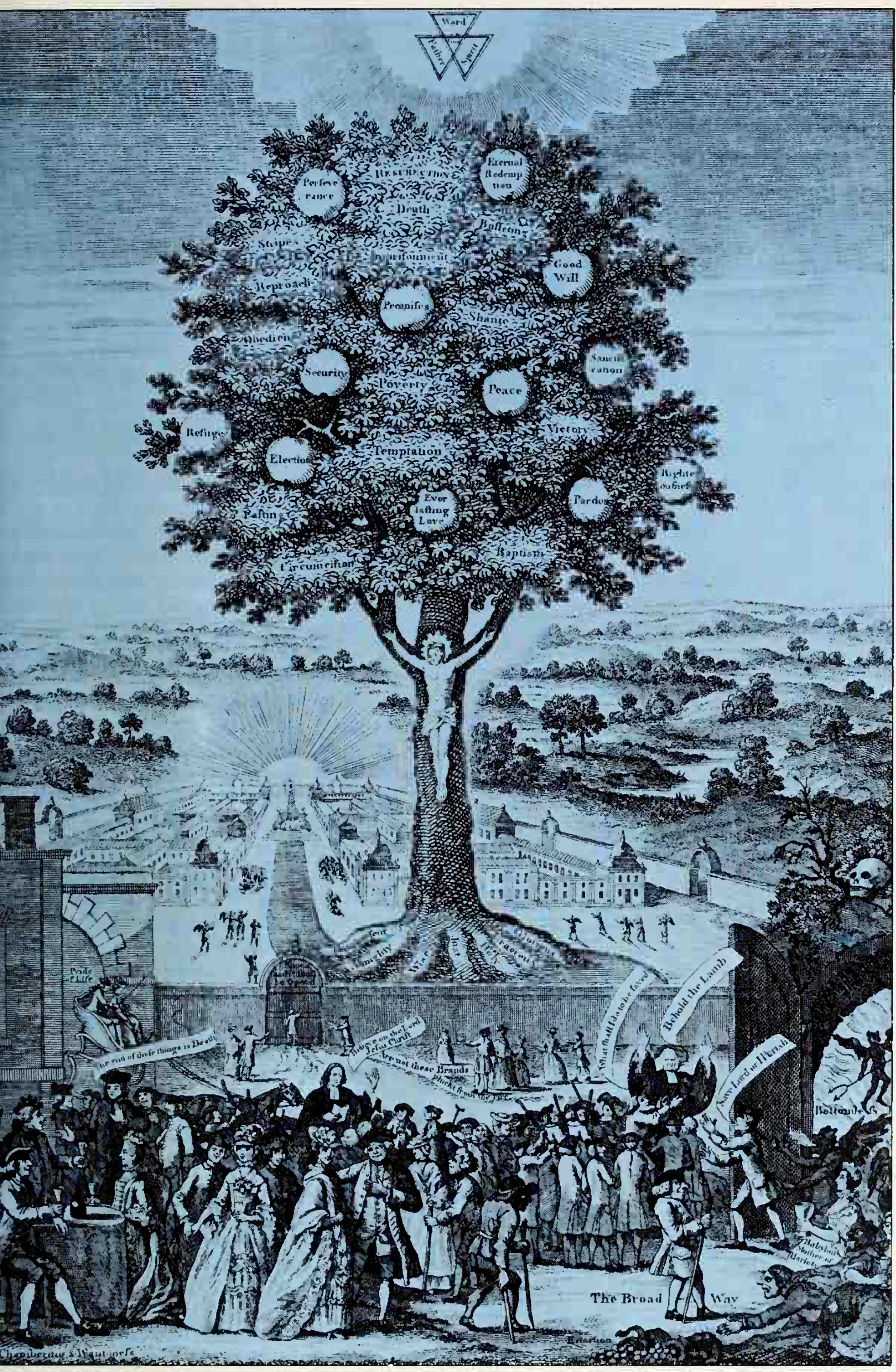
The official Hebrew doctrine of Man was, accordingly, very similar to the Mesopotamian view. The living person was regarded as a psycho-physical organism, compounded of material body and an animating principle, *nephesh*. Death irretrievably shattered this composite entity, and the consequences are vividly described in 2 Samuel (14.14): 'We must all die, we are like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.' What survived this disintegration departed to Sheol, an awful subterranean deep, like the Mesopotamian 'land of no-return'.

This pessimistic view of human destiny was changed in the 2nd century BC by the acceptance of the idea of a resurrection and judgement of the dead. What caused the change is not clear but it had significant repercussions for the Hebrew doctrine of Man. Human destiny was now extended with positive significance beyond death. However, because the traditional conception of human nature, as a compound of physical and psychical elements, was retained a resurrected life meant a reconstitution of the physical body. On this point, Hebrew eschatology became similar to that of Egypt, for both were based on the conviction that a body was essential to personal existence. But where the Egyptians sought to preserve the body by mummification, the Jews looked to its miraculous reconstitution by Yahweh.

The Urns of Fate

What may be described as the classical Greek evaluation of human nature and destiny was as pessimistic as the Mesopotamian and early Hebrew views. It first finds expression in the Homeric poems. The most dramatic presentation occurs in the *Odyssey* (book 11), which describes how Odysseus descended into Hades to learn the cause of the misfortunes that prevented his return home after the fall of Troy. In Hades he meets the shade of his dead mother. He tries vainly to embrace her shadowy image, and cries out in frustration and grief. His mother's shade replies: 'this is the way decreed for mortals when they die. The sinews cease to hold the flesh and bones together; for they are destroyed by the power of the blazing fire, as soon as the (conscious) life (*thymos*) leaves the white bones, and the shade (*psyche*), hovers about and then flits away.'

This passage mentions the three constituents of human nature, according to Homer: the body, which was cremated at death; the *thymos*, which was the conscious or rational self; the *psyche*, the life-principle. Death disintegrated the union of these constituent elements: the body was destroyed, the *thymos* ceased to exist, and the *psyche* descended to Hades. The *psyche* was imagined as a shadowy replica (called an *eidolon*) of the living person, but it had no consciousness. In Hades the shades of the dead are portrayed as being capable only of making chirping noises like birds. However, as this episode in the *Odyssey* shows, they could acquire a momentary consciousness by tasting the



Brompton Studio

Far left 'We must all die, we are like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again': in the Old Testament death and the other ills of the human condition are the consequences of man's disobedience; Adam and Eve with the Tree of Knowledge, from a 13th century MS ***Left*** The Tree of Life, equated in this 18th century drawing with the cross on which Christ died to rescue human nature from the predicament to which the sin of Eden had condemned it. In the foreground 'this present evil world' is contrasted with the heavenly New Jerusalem in the background

blood of a sacrificed animal – an idea derived rom the primitive belief that blood is the life-substance'.

Several attempts are made in the *Iliad* to ccount for human fate. In one place Zeus s pictured as arbitrarily handing out mixures of good and bad lots to individuals rom two urns that stood on the floor of Olympus. Other imagery is used elsewhere: hat the gods 'bind' men's fates upon them; hat 'mighty Fate' spins 'her thread' of destiny at a person's birth; that Zeus weighs he fates of heroes in his golden scales. The luidity of this imagery suggests that, at this early stage in Greek thought, the problem was gradually emerging of relating human destiny to the divine government of the universe. But it was a problem that was never satisfactorily solved, for the Greek concept of deity was essentially based on experience of cosmic power, which is indifferent to human aspirations and values. This is clearly evident in Stoicism, which represented the most sustained effort made in the Graeco-Roman world to produce a philosophy of life in terms of a realistic appraisal of the human situation.

According to Stoic doctrine, the superiority of man over the animals lay in his possession of a rational mind *(nous)*, which enabled him to grasp the scheme of the universe. This implied that man could consciously will 'to live according to Nature', which in practice meant conforming one's desires and conduct to the limitations of human existence imposed by the physics of the universe. It was an austere creed, which offered the individual no hope beyond the personal satisfaction of having the strength of steeling himself to accept ultimate personal extinction. For death, as the Stoic philosopher Epictetus explains, is necessary, 'so that the revolution of the universe may be accomplished; for it has a need of the things that are now coming into being, and the things that shall be, and the things that have been accomplished.'

Stoicism was a product of the innate rationalism of the Greek mind, which could assess life objectively, uninfluenced by a religious tradition that claimed the authority of divine revelation. As such it appealed to minds sufficiently educated to appreciate its logic and resolute enough to live according to its austere counsel. But there is an abundance of evidence that, apart from professed Stoics, many ordinary people also resigned themselves to the fate that Homer first describes, and which finds expression in subsequent literature of all kinds. The many surviving funerary monuments, carved with scenes of the last farewell of the deceased, express a quiet but infinitely sad acceptance of the inevitable. Occasionally a note of defiance is heard, as in the following epitaph: 'I was not; I became; I am not; I care not.'

The Body, A Tomb

This pessimistic estimate of man's nature and destiny, which can be traced throughout classical culture, from Homeric Greece to Graeco-Roman society, was not accepted by all. Despite its obvious realism, many sought for a more comforting creed. The ancient Eleusinian Mysteries and Orphism promised their respective initiates deliverance from death and a blessed afterlife. Orphism was the more sophisticated cult and it involved the idea of the transmigration of souls, an idea which implied a very different conception of human nature from that of the classical tradition. It presupposed that in each person an immortal ethereal soul *(psyche)* was imprisoned in a material body. Orphic mythology explained that this situation was due to an ancient crime, and that the soul's true destiny was to return to its original divine source. This destiny could be achieved only by the soul's realization of its true nature, and by following a discipline designed to emancipate it from attachment to the world of material things. A favourite

The Calamity of Original Sin

To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken, of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truth, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion . . . all this is a vision to dizzy and appal; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.

What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence . . . And so I argue about the world; – *if* there be a God, *since* there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator.

John Henry Newman *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*

Anthropomorphism, the tendency to picture the divine in human form, is extremely widespread, as is the tendency to believe that man himself is potentially divine *Right* Manjusri, the Buddhist personification of wisdom *Centre* Apollo, the Greek god of the arts and prophecy *Far right* Spirits in human form, an aboriginal bark painting from Australia

Orphic saying was *soma, sema,* 'the body, a tomb'. (See ELEUSIS; ORPHEUS AND ORPHISM.)

Orphic ideas seem to have influenced the philosophy of Plato, in which the immortality of the soul is a major theme. He represents his master Socrates as exhorting his fellow-countrymen 'to take care of the soul'. He accepts the idea of the transmigration of the soul through many incarnations in both human and animal bodies, from contact with which it is contaminated and must make atonement. He proclaims it to be the task of the philosopher, through his superior knowledge, to free his soul from bondage to the body and assist it to regain its original state of blessedness.

This dualistic conception of human nature, of an immortal soul dwelling in a mortal body, became a firmly established tradition in the Graeco-Roman world. It was the basic concept of Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Neo-Pythagoreanism and Neoplatonism. These religio-philosophical cults were concerned to explain how the ethereal soul came to be incarcerated in a physical body, living in a world of material things. Each offered a way, usually involving esoteric knowledge and discipline, by which the soul might be delivered from its bondage and return to the divine source from which it had fallen. These ideas profoundly affected the Christian doctrine of Man.

Raised Incorruptible

Since Christianity originated in Judaea and the first Christians were Jews, Jewish ideas about human nature and destiny inevitably formed the basis of the primitive Christian view. As the New Testament shows, belief in the resurrection and judgement of the dead were fundamental tenets of the new faith. The conception of the resurrection reflected the Jewish view of human nature as a psycho-physical organism in a very literal sense. This is most notably seen in the description of the resurrected Jesus. According to St Luke (chapter 24), when the disciples saw Jesus in his resurrected state, they were terrified, supposing 'that they saw a spirit'. But Jesus assured them of his physical reality: 'See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.' When some disciples still remained doubtful, he proposed a further test: 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of a broiled fish, which he proceeded to eat before them.

This amazing emphasis upon the concrete reality of the resurrected body of Jesus reflects the belief of the early Christians about the essentiality of the physical body. But as the writings of St Paul show, when this Jewish idea was presented to Gentiles who held the dualistic view of human nature that derived from Plato and Orphism, offence was given. In consequence, adjustments were made to accommodate belief that the soul was immortal by nature and able to exist independently of the body However, the Jewish concept of a physical resurrection was too integral a part of the original Christian message to be abandoned. It was retained, together with the idea of a Last Judgement.

The Christian doctrine of Man thus taught that God created human souls to be immortal, but placed them in physical bodies with which they became essentially connected. At death, the soul left the body and was immediately judged. For the majority of mankind this judgement resulted in the soul's consignment to purgatory, to expiate its sins. At the Second Coming of Christ, the decomposed bodies of the dead would be reconstituted and their souls would re-enter them for the Final Judgement.

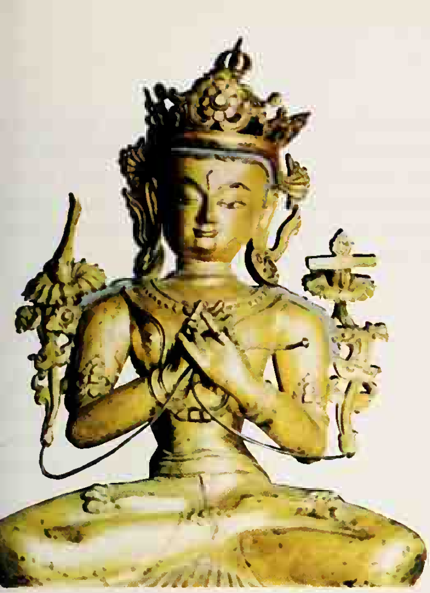
The Christian doctrine of Man involved the doctrine of original sin. It was taught that Adam had implicated all his descendants in his original act of disobedience to his Creator. Consequently, all subsequent generations were deserving of God's wrath from the moment of birth, quite apart from the guilt they later acquired by their own actual sins. Being thus a Fallen Race, mankind was predisposed to evil. This meant, according to Christian theologians, that man was not only unable to save himself from the state of perdition into which he was born, but he could not even desire to repent without God's grace. The means by which God provided salvation for mankind is expounded in the doctrine of the Atonement, and constitutes an essential part of the foundational teaching of Christianity (see ATONEMENT). Those who repented of their sins and accepted Christ as their Saviour could hope that, after enduring the cleansing fires of purgatory, they would be reunited with their bodies, and, justified at the Last Judgement, would pass on to the eternal bliss of the Beatific Vision of God.

The doctrine of Man in Islam has some affinity to those of Judaism and Christianity; the fact constitutes part of the problem of the relation of the Arabian religion to Judaism and Christianity, which predated it. The affinity is especially marked in the eschatology of the Koran. Mohammed regarded himself as sent by Allah to warn his countrymen of the coming of divine judgement. This 'Last Judgement' would involve the resurrection of the dead, and would result in the vindication of the faithful and their reward in paradise, and the eternal damnation of the wicked to the torments of hell.

Souls Beneath the Throne

Man was, by implication, created to serve Allah and repudiate all other gods. According to the Koran, man is made of fire-clay which was transformed into flesh. Within the body was a vital principle or soul *(nafs)*, and the two united to form the living person – hence the stress laid on a physical resurrection at the Last Day. The theme of human predestination figures much in Islam, owing to the supreme emphasis put on the omnipotence and omniscience of Allah. It leads to such uncompromising statements as that of sura 25 of the Koran: 'Allah leadeth astray whom He willeth and guideth whom He willeth.' However, the very word 'Islam' is derived from an Arabic verb signifying the idea of submission to a supreme will. As such, it presupposes that the individual has the freedom of will to submit himself absolutely to the commands of Allah.

The meagre references in the Koran to the nature of man led to much later speculation about the soul. The belief became generally established that human souls were created by Allah and kept in a shrine beneath his throne until required for their respective incarnations. The immortality of the soul was also accepted. The Sufi mystics held that the soul was of divine origin and craved for reunion with its Creator, and that this reunion could be achieved by mystical trance. However, despite these developments, Islam has remained essentially a simple faith founded on the revelation, made to Mohammed, of Allah's purpose for man, and formulated in a few practical precepts of conduct (see ISLAM; SUFIS).



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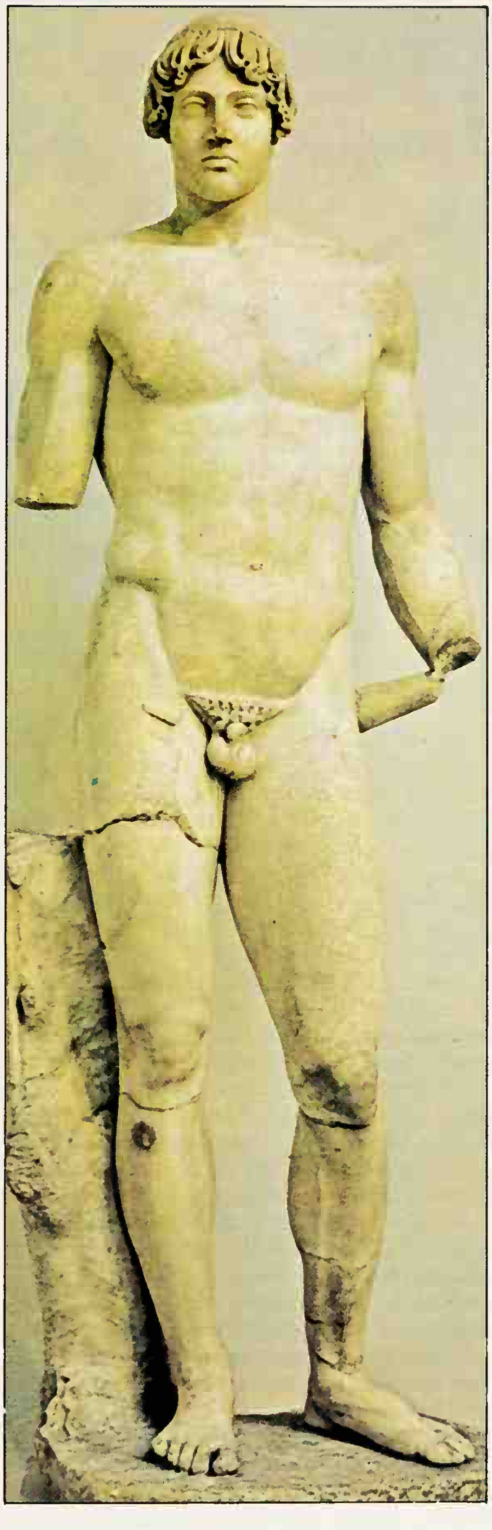
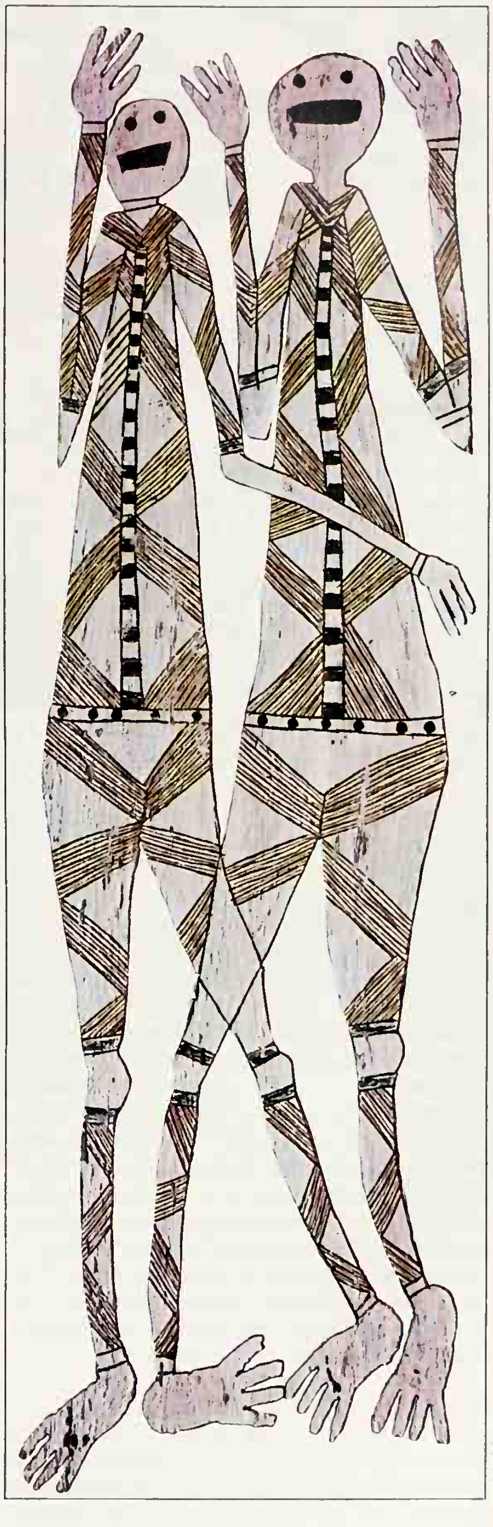


Michael Holford



Axel Poignant

he Way of Deliverance

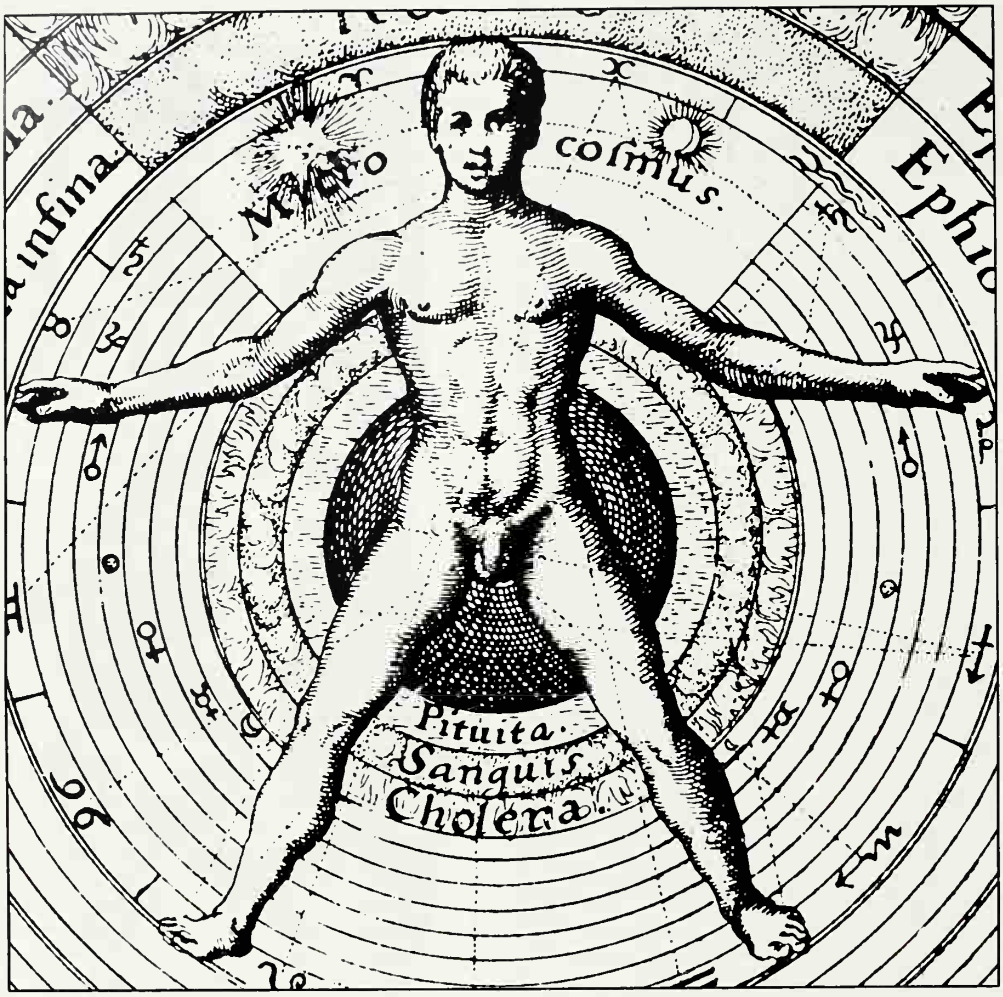
Vhile these various evaluations of human ature and destiny were being worked out in he ancient Near East and Europe, in India nother estimate was gradually established vhich was destined to affect most of the eoples of eastern Asia. This estimate was imilar to that of Orphism in as far as it was ased on the idea of the transmigration of ouls. But the Indian interpretation dates rom about 600 BC, and is undoubtedly lder than the Orphic view. Whether the atter derived from India has been much ebated, without any agreed conclusion. The dea of the rebirth or transmigration of souls s not necessarily a sophisticated concept, and occurs among many primitive peoples, so hat the Indian and the Orphic views might vell have had separate origins.

The Indian view of Man is certainly a ophisticated estimate. It maintains that he individual self, or *atman*, is really dentical with Brahman, the source or rinciple of existence. But owing to *avidya*, r ignorance, the atman believes itself to be n individual self-conscious person. In turn t takes the phenomenal world for reality, nd involves itself in it. Consequently, it ecomes subject to the process of Time, vhich is manifested in unceasing cycles of reation and destruction. For the atman or elf this means *samsara*, or rebirth, which s likewise a ceaseless process of dying and eing reborn, with all the attendant suffer- ng. Together with samsara operates the aw of karma, which causes the atman to vork out in each incarnation the con- equences of its actions in past incarnate ives. This process conditions the form of ach period of rebirth.

Thus, according to this Indian doctrine, t any given moment every living being is in hat state of fortune, be it good or ill, vhich his past karma has entailed. However, his situation is not hopeless and Hinduism, n its various forms, offers a way of deliver- nce. Basically this involves the effective pprehension of its own true nature by the tman. Such apprehension implies the ecognition, as the *Chandogya Upanishad* ersely puts it, that 'the self of mine within he heart, this is Brahman'. But this recog- ition is not just a mental act; if it is to be ffective, it involves an effort to abstract he self from its fatal attachment to existence n this world, which it has taken for reality. Such abstraction is difficult and can be achieved only by a hard discipline. When *moksa*, 'salvation', is finally achieved, individual existence in this world ceases, and the atman is absorbed into Brahman as a drop of rain merges into the sea (see BRAHMAN; HINDUISM; KARMA).

This Indian interpretation of existence, in its early Upanishadic form, seems to have provided both the basis and point of departure for the Buddhist doctrine of Man. Buddhism concentrated particularly on the miseries of human existence by way of introduction to its own gospel of salvation. It accepted the doctrines of samsara and karma; but it rejected the Hindu concept of a self (atman) that was continuously reborn to new forms of incarnated life. Instead, it maintained that the idea of the empirical self stems from a conglomeration of various mental and physical factors *(skandhas)*, which produce the sensation of individual existence in a material world. Since this illusory self cherishes its sense of personal being, it takes the world apprehended by its senses for reality and attaches itself to it. Hence, as in Hindu thought, the individual becomes subject to the process of continuous death and rebirth, with all their concomitant suffering.

According to the Buddhist analysis of the human situation, this universal illusion of personal existence is due to a kind of primordial ignorance (avidya), which it is the task of the Buddhist teacher to expose. To gain deliverance from samsara and



Man as microcosm, illustrating the theory that man is the universe in miniature, that he contains 'in himself all that is contained in the greater world': drawing from *Utriusque Cosmi Historia*, a work by the 17th century mystical philosopher Robert Fludd

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karma, the disciple has to pursue an austere discipline of mind and body. The final suppression of all desire for personal existence achieves Nirvana. Owing to the essential subtlety of Buddhist metaphysics, it is very difficult to be certain what this term means. Literally it implies personal extinction; but as used in Buddhist texts it seems to denote a positive state of being, yet one that is so wholly other from empirical existence that it negates all known forms of being (see BUDDHISM; NIRVANA).

Yin and Yang

The spread of Buddhism throughout eastern and south-eastern Asia has meant that the Buddhist view of human nature and destiny has influenced a large part of mankind. It was accepted into China, where it tended to intermingle with or affect the native faiths of Confucianism and Taoism. The native Chinese evaluation of man, however, had certain distinctive features.

The interpretations of man so far described, although they have varied much in their estimates, have had one feature in common. They all set mankind, as a unique species, over against the rest of creation. Instinctively they assume that man should have a special destiny in the scheme of things. The Chinese estimate has notably lacked this assumption. On the contrary, it has stressed man's integration with his natural environment. This approach finds characteristic expression in the idea of Yin and Yang. The terms denote two alternating principles which the Chinese, from at least the 5th century BC, discerned as operative in all forms of being throughout the universe. Man was not excepted from their operation, and a Yin-Yang anthropology was elaborated which explained human nature in these terms. The following passage from the *Lu-shih Ch'un Ch'ui* succinctly states this view: 'Heaven, Earth and all things are like the body of one man, and this is what is called the Great Unity *(ta t'ung)*.' And it goes on to define the duty of the Sage as that of showing 'how the *yin* and *yang* form the essence of things, and how people, birds and beasts are in a state of peace'. (See also CHINA.)

The original teaching of Zoroaster on the subject of Man is obscure. He uses two terms, *urvan* and *daena*, signifying the non-physical components of human nature that survive death. The urvan seems to approximate to the 'soul', and the daena to denote something akin to 'conscience'. In later Zoroastrianism five constituents of human nature were distinguished and the idea of the daena was also curiously elaborated. The dead were described as meeting their daena after death: to the righteous it appeared as a beauteous maiden; to the wicked as a hideous hag. Zoroastrian eschatology involved a corporeal resurrection, with adults restored to a physical state of 40 years of age, and those who had died as children to the form of 15 years. There was also an Immediate and a Final Judgement of the dead. (See also ZOROASTRIANISM.)

S. G. F. BRANDON

The Universal Man

'What is man that thou art mindful of him? . . . Yet thou hast made him little less than God' (Psalm 8). These opposite feelings, of man's humble insignificance and yet of his overwhelming importance, were expressed for hundreds of years in the West, in the theory of macrocosm and microcosm, that man is the universe, and perhaps God, in miniature, a toy copy of a great original. 'Man,' Agrippa said, 'hath in himself all that is contained in the greater world, so that there remaineth nothing which is not found even really and truly in man himself,' and man 'also doth receive and contain even God himself . . . Therefore man is the most express Image of God, seeing man containeth in himself all things which are in God' (see AGRIPPA).

Since the universe, or macrocosm, is conceived of as a gigantic human organism it has naturally sometimes been pictured as the body of man, the universal or primal or heavenly man. In the Cabala this is Adam Kadmon, whose body is formed by the sefiroth of the Tree of Life. In the Lurianic Cabala, when the divine light of the godhead flowed out into space, the first being which came into existence, the first and highest manifestation of the godhead, was Adam Kadmon. It was from his eyes, ears, nose and mouth that the splendid lights of the sefiroth shone forth (see CABALA; LURIA).

Adam Kadmon is not the same as the godhead, which is beyond human comprehending, but he is God the Creator, God manifested in the universe, and he is the God who can be known by man, for earthly man is a miniature image of him. Adam Kadmon is the whole universe as we know it, the sum total of all the possibilities open to man, and it has been pointed out that his mind, which is the 'universal mind', resembles Jung's collective unconscious.

In Manicheism, the primal man was a manifestation of God, clothed in the armour of light and sent out to do battle with the invading forces of darkness. It was his defeat which allowed particles of divine light to be captured by the evil powers and imprisoned in matter. In the Lurianic Cabala, the divine light emanating from Adam Kadmon broke the vessels which should have contained it, and so particles of light were scattered, a catastrophe paralleled by the Fall of Adam in Eden. The biblical Adam, according to this theory, was at first a spiritual man, not a physical one, a 'great soul' whose body was made not of matter but of light. He was created to restore the fallen sparks of light to their proper place but he failed. His 'great soul', in which the entire soul-stuff of humanity was concentrated, shattered and its divine sparks became exiled in the world of human matter and earthly human nature.

In Gnosticism, again, man contains the divine spark, the inner seed of heavenly light imprisoned in the darkness of the material world and the physical body, a spark which can escape from its prison to be reunited with its source in the godhead. The liberation comes when it realizes its identity (paralleled in Hinduism by the self's 'effective apprehension of its own true nature' – see above). 'The Gnostic is a Gnostic because he knows, by revelation, who his true self is.' Similarly, the Manicheans believed that their doctrines 'revealed to them their real identity', and so freed them from the grip of evil and matter (see GNOSTICISM; MANICHEANS).

Gnosticism and Manicheism seem to have been based originally on a religious experience, the discovery of the true and divine self in a man's innermost being, described as the higher Self, the twin or familiar, or the guardian angel. The discovery and liberation of the true self remains the great aim of Western occultism and magic. It is this divine element in his nature which in magical theory gives man his potentially limitless power. 'The proper study of mankind is man', with a vengeance, for man is both the measure and the master of all things.

(See also numerous articles, including BODY; FATE; FIRST MAN; HELL; IMMORTALITY; JUDGEMENT; LIGHT; MACROCOSM; MAGIC; MYSTICISM; PARADISE; REINCARNATION; RELIGION.)

FURTHER READING: R. Abel, *Man is the Measure* (Free Press, 1976); S.G.F. Brandon, *Man and his Destiny in the Great Religions* (Manchester Univ. Press, 1962); S. Radhakrishnan and P.T. Raju ed, *The Concept of Man: a Study of Comparative Religion* (Allen & Unwin, 1960); B. Rensch, *Homo Sapiens: from man to Demi God* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1972).

The idea of a power underlying all magic, residing in the king, the priest and the shaman, and even in objects and places, is common to many religions; a power which may be dangerous or beneficial, according to the way in which it is directed

MANA

ORIGINALLY A POLYNESIAN concept of spiritual power, mana is invisible, imponderable and yet powerful. Mana derives from the divine ancestors and enters to some degree into all beings and things descended from them. The nearer the descendant is to the source, the more powerful the content of mana: a Polynesian chief who was chosen because of his close kinship with the gods was the vessel of a greater degree of mana than a commoner.

Such beliefs are widespread in human communities, and so the use of the word has been extended to cover similar concepts in many cultures often far removed from Polynesia. It is the mysterious power by which English kings cured scrofula, the King's Evil, by touching the victim. It is the force which fills objects used by famous shamans, so that no one else dare use them. R. H. Codrington, who defined the term as he found it in use among the Melanesians, tells us that mana was the power underlying all magic, and the means by which men were able to cause and cure sickness, control the forces of matter, and to bless and curse others.

In some ways the concept of mana reminds us of the now defunct theory that all motion in space, including that of light, was transmitted through a medium known as the circumambient ether. Mana is thought of as being the means by which telepathy works across space. The reason is that people need to think of a medium of some kind through which the idea, or the power, is projected.

Mana was lost through contact with lesser containers. It flowed from the more powerful to the less powerful and sometimes caused destruction. This applied not only to material objects but to human beings as well. The fear that harm might come from contact between humans was very important socially. It conditioned the relation between the sexes at times of crisis, since women were universally regarded as the powers of earth and fertility, and therefore absorbed mana. At times of war, and during hunting festivals, women were kept separate from men. A warrior who had intercourse before setting out on an expedition might bring bad luck to the whole venture. This superstition was found in many parts of the world, and was based on the belief that with the emission of a man's semen he was losing mana to the powers of earth. He would either have to go through a series of rituals to regain power, or else leave the expedition. Among the ancient Chibcha of Colombia, a boy captured for sacrifice to the sun god when he reached puberty was set free if a girl took him as her mate. The power he contained had been taken by earth and moon forces and so would be of no avail to the sun.

Among the Maori of New Zealand there were times when a chief, as the head of a line descended from the gods, became so full of mana that no one dared touch him. In particular his head was a centre of force, and was never touched by others of lesser rank. The most critical period was when he was being decorated with his *moko* tattoo. Then he could not touch anything without a risk of setting off a rush of dangerous power, and had to be fed by noblemen with gruel poured into his mouth through a wooden spout. The tattoo artist was magically protected, but as he worked with mallet and tiny shell-pointed comb, he had to make sure that he never actually handled the flesh of his subject. All women were kept away from the house where the great magic was pulsating. At this stage anyone accidentally touching the chief or his more important belongings would drop dead, probably from sheer horror at the consequences.

Contagious Sanctity

A Maori chief would not blow a fire with his mouth; for his sacred breath would communicate its sanctity to the fire, which would pass it on to the pot on the fire, which would pass it on to the meat in the pot, which would pass it on to the man who ate the meat, which was in the pot, which stood on the fire, which was breathed on by the chief; so that the eater, infected by the chief's breath conveyed through these intermediaries, would surely die.

J. G. Frazer *The Golden Bough*

Mana was the power which guarded the objects placed under a tapu (taboo) restriction. If the rules were broken the power would flow into the offender and destroy him. It would take elaborate ceremonies and heavy payments to bring about a cure, if it were possible at all. The power of mana was quite impersonal. It was not the vengeful action of a ghostly ancestor, but an inherent sanction: if the rules were broken the penalty would follow. Yet it was possible for a properly skilled *tohunga* or priest to lay a taboo on anything he wished, and thereby activate the power of mana.

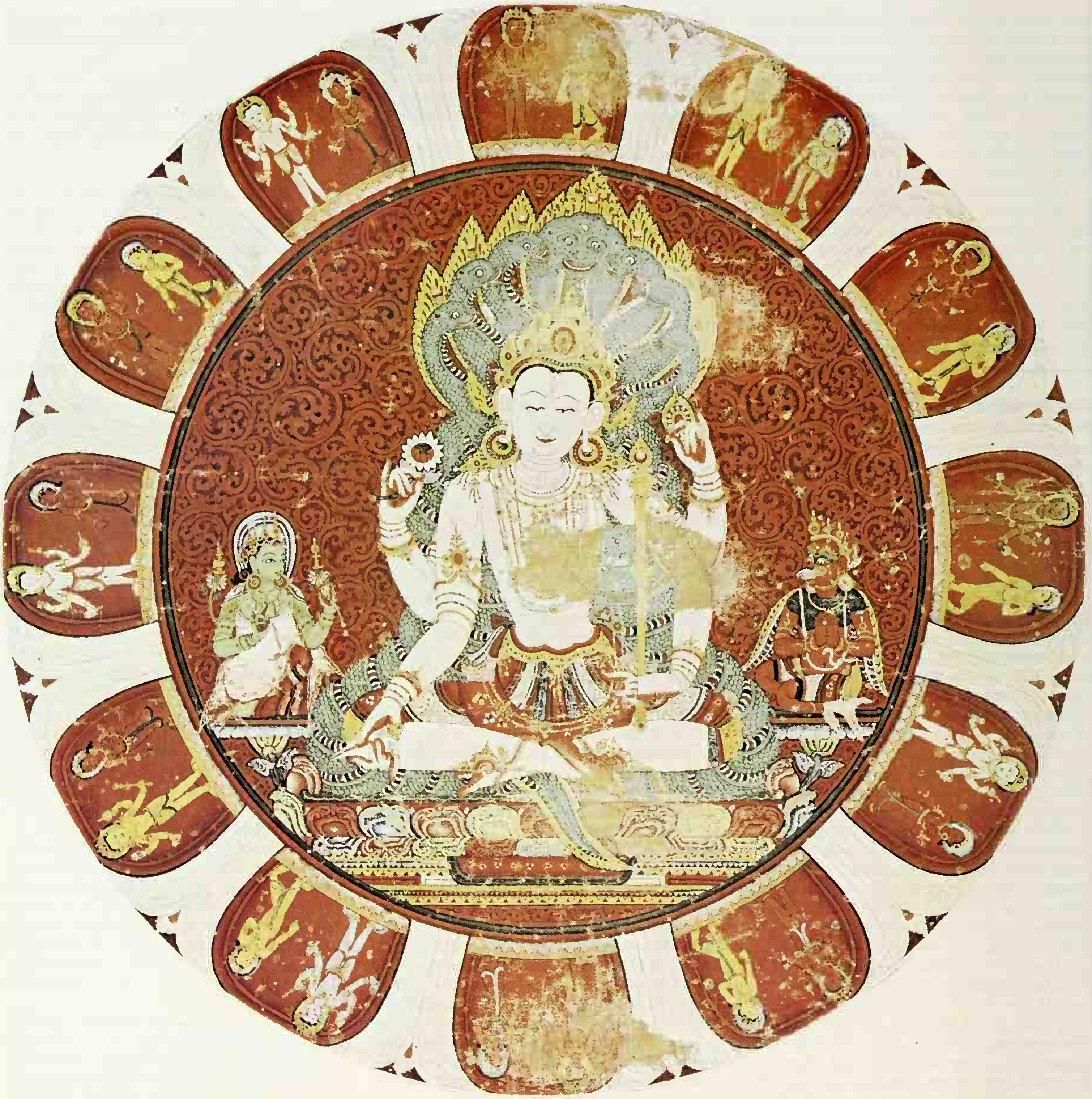
Power in Holy Places

A development of the idea of the protective power of mana was the common religious belief that some places were so inherently holy that only a few specialist individuals might approach them. An example was the Holy of Holies in the Temple at Jerusalem, where once a year the High Priest alone might enter and stand humbly before the Ark.

There are still places where mysterious power can be felt. Mostly they are anciently sacred places, chosen perhaps because of some natural force which could be sensed by visitors. They play their part in ceremonial activity, especially among modern witch covens, because of the possibility of concentrating and directing whatever energy has remained within them. Scientifically this is not a reasonable activity, but the traditions behind such holy places are so ancient that they compel respect, even if it is only some kind of telepathic contact which is made with the ceremonies of old.

It is impossible to give a satisfactory definition of mana, because the concept is diffuse. However, the Polynesians used the word to describe something which was perfectly understandable to them. It did not need any exact scientific definition because from their point of view its existence was an undisputed fact.

(See also MAORI; POLYNESIA.)



The psychologist C. G. Jung recognized in the mandala, the mystic circle used in Eastern magic and meditative practice, an archetypal image from the deeps of the mind expressing the soul itself

MANDALA

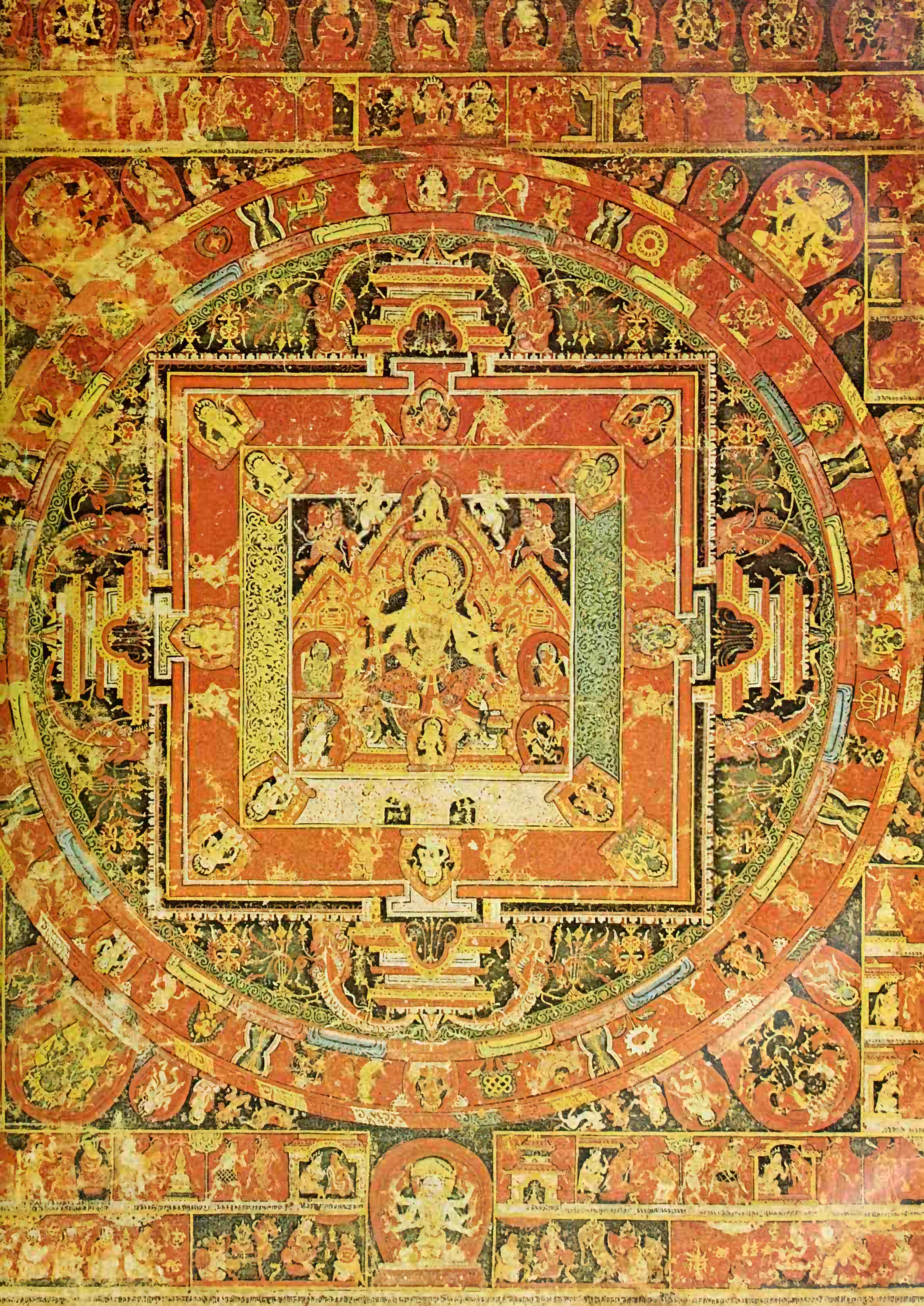
THE WORD MANDALA is Sanskrit, meaning 'circle'; it is used in Hindu and Buddhist ritualism to denote a mystical diagram, usually circular in outline, although it may occasionally be drawn in some other symmetrical figure, such as a polygon, square or geometrical pattern with the outer border 'concentred' about a fixed point. In all cases the circumscribing circle is there, even if invisibly, enclosing the pattern.

A mandala is generally represented physically, and may be engraved on metal, inscribed on ground specially cleared to receive the tracing, or marked on the floor of a room. It may be painted on cloth, or made by sprinkling coloured sand or pigment on a board. It may be used over and over again, or erased, washed off or burned after its temporary use.

But the mandala does not have to be drawn in actual fact. It may be memorized and traced mentally either on the ground, or better still in the air, and held in the mind's eye by meditative methods. It may even be danced, as the Bon priests of Tibet do in certain secret rites, hopping about this way and that as they demarcate the outlines and add the inner traceries of the pattern required in their particular rite.

The design of a mandala, whether simple or intricate, varies as its object and purpose vary. In certain magical rites the mandala

The mandala or circle is one of the most widespread of all symbols, found in religious art in all parts of the world. In the East its consecrated space may be regarded as charged with the presence of deities who have been housed within it *Above* The central figure of this Hindu mandala is Vishnu, seated upon the coils of the snake Shesha and surrounded by protective deities *Right* Nepalese mandala of the 16th century: the central figure is Vasudhara, the earth goddess of Buddhist mythology



serves to circumscribe the territory in which the adept operates. The magician of the Western tradition draws such a protective magic circle before he invokes spirits or demons to appear before him. As long as he is within the circle they can do him no harm, and with this safeguard he commands them to do his will.

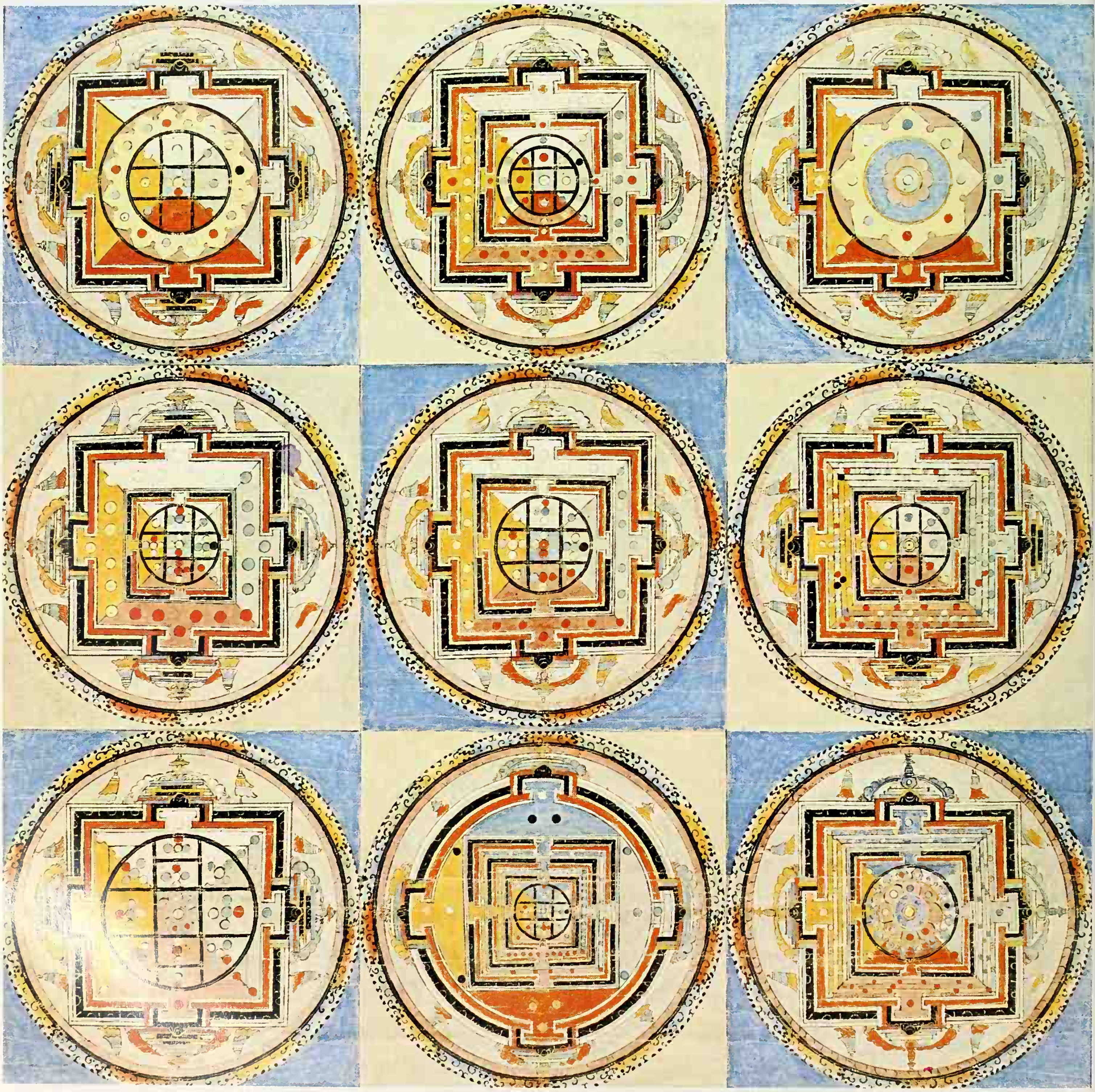
Engine of Power

In Eastern magical practice the mandala is employed to draw down and house the deities or, in the case of black magical rites, the demons. By means of spells, offerings and invocations the practitioner calls down spiritual beings to occupy a place assigned to them in the diagram and charge it with their presence. It now becomes a *yantra*, an 'engine' of power; every yantra differs according to the power of the occupying entities and the uses made of them.

In some cases the divisions of a mandala are given numerological significance and a mathematical pattern is worked out on this basis. In Tantric meditation (see TANTRISM) the yantra takes on a sexual character and is believed to represent the female organs of generation. Some yantras are thought to have talismanic properties and almost a life of their own, radiating a power that projects the qualities traditionally associated with them and for which they have been constructed. These qualities may be beneficent, healing, tranquillity-bestowing or on the other hand malicious, evil and destructive. Students of the subject say that drawing a mandala correctly and giving it vitality, so as to connect it with the unseen world, is a matter not to be undertaken lightly in a spirit of curiosity or dilettantism.

The mandala or circle is one of the most widespread of all symbols and is rich in meaning. We find it in a hundred familiar variations, but also in the more profound manifestations of religion and art. It represents the Infinite. The 17th century French theologian Blaise Pascal said that God is a circle of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere. But

Series of 19th century Tibetan mandalas from a temple wall: their elaborate designs, charged with occult significance, were used as aids to Tantric meditation



e circle also symbolizes the finite. It is both e boundless and the bounded; the divine nd the human. Its symbolism overflows in any directions. Rayed, it is an emblem of e sun; spoked, it represents the wheel ee WHEEL). Divided by an S-shaped ameter it is the well-known Yang-Yin mbol of Chinese mysticism (see I CHING).

The circle pattern is found in the ground ans of great architectural creations ancient d modern, and appears in the traceries magical designs in all parts of the world. can be seen in the sand paintings of the avaho Indians of New Mexico, in the upas (dome-shaped temples) of India, in e calendar stone of the Aztecs, in the aleolithic rock engravings of Rhodesia. It gures in the symbolical designs of the Voodoo cult, in ancient Chinese bronze shields and in the visions described by the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel.

An Expression of the Psyche

Sometimes the mandala is regarded as a map of hidden dimensions, and is then drawn in the form of a maze. Or it may serve as a means of activating a mental reflex and reproducing in the conscious mind the symbolism of our hidden selves. It has fascinated psychologists as an expression of the deeps of the mind, and C. G. Jung found in the mandala one of the great primordial images of mankind.

Often terrifying aspects are revealed in the figure. As a clock face it has a certain panic element in it, of man caught in the toils of time and space and unable to free himself from its limitations. Tibetan and Tantric forms of meditation on the mandala can evoke gruesome images, of skulls brimful of blood, decaying human entrails, human bones that do a *danse macabre* of their own. All such are regarded as phantom shapes emanating from our own minds and partial reflections of our inner natures. For in considering the mandala we are analysing the self.

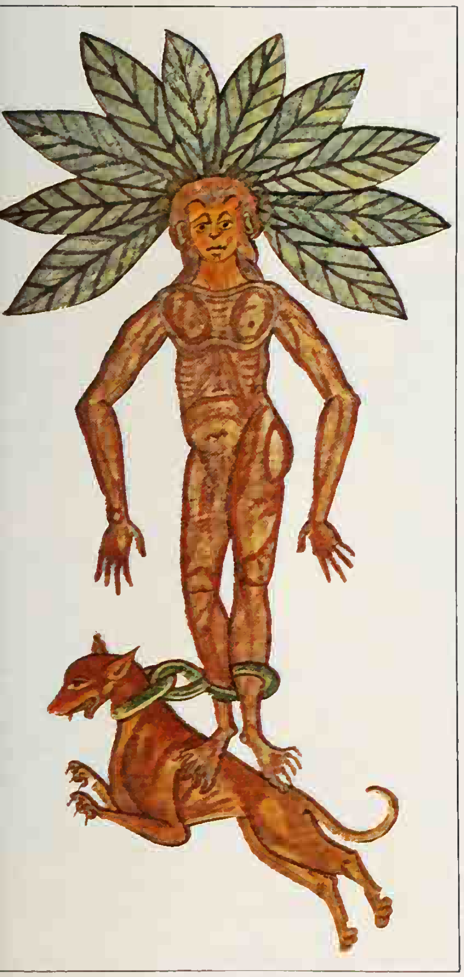
(See also CIRCLE.)

BENJAMIN WALKER

FURTHER READING: C. Jung, *Mandala Symbolism* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1972); J. and M. Arquelles, *Mandala* (Shambhala, 1972); G. Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala* (Rider, 1961).

prooting a mandrake was, according to popular lief, a dangerous business, for as the plant was lled out of the earth it gave a shriek so fearful at anyone hearing it would die. The roots of is strangely human plant became lucky annikins, which were regularly washed, essed and asked for advice

ANDRAKE



British Museum

lost of the superstitions about the mandrake ad their origin in the supposed resemblance of e forked roots to the human body. If dug up, e plant was believed to utter a shriek fatal the hearer; it was therefore recommended at it should be pulled up by a dog

FEW PLANTS have been credited with more fictitious attributes than the mandrake. It is difficult to suggest why this plant should have become so notorious: although it is an unusual one it is no odder than many others, and the forking or multiple root which is responsible for most of its associations with magic is to be found in such homely vegetables as the parsnip. Quite early in the British herbal record, writers may be found explaining how nonsensical the beliefs about the mandrake must be. For instance, in John Gerard's *Herball* of 1597 we find this denial of the plant's supposed attributes; it is perhaps worth quoting his description of the plant as well as his comments.

> The male Mandrake hath great broad long smooth leaves of a dark green colour, flat spread upon the ground: among which come up the flowers of a pale whitish colour, standing every one upon a single small and weak foot-stalk of a whitish green colour: in their places grow round Apples of a yellowish colour, smooth, soft and glittering, of a strong smell: in which are contained flat and smooth seeds in fashion of a little kidney, like those of the Thorn-apple. The root is long, thick, whitish, divided many times into two or three parts resembling the legs of a man, as it hath been reported; whereas in truth it is no otherwise than in the roots of carrots, parsnips, and such like, forked or divided into two or more parts, which Nature taketh no account of. There hath been many ridiculous tales brought up of this plant, whether of old wives, or some runagate Surgeons or Physic-mongers I know not, (a title bad enough for them) but sure some one or more that sought to make themselves famous and skilful above others, were the first broachers of that error I speak of.

Botanically the mandrake is *Mandragora officinarum*, and it belongs to the Solanaceae in company with henbane, belladonna, thorn-apple and tobacco. Its flowers are brighter than Gerard suggests, varying from pale to rich mauve-blue, sometimes in scores, sometimes only a handful. There are autumn and spring flowering forms, and the blooms are followed by odorous orange fruits looking like a nestful of eggs.

Like so many of its relations, mandrake is narcotic, the root containing an alkaloid similar to atropine. In ancient times it was used as a pain-killer and sleep-inducer; Pliny reports patients under operation chewing a piece of the root to anaesthetize themselves. A medieval English writer described its use in medicine: 'When the sick man is in anguish, this potion boiled from the mandrake his root will still the pain – nor will he suffer aught should the Leech probe his wounds, or e'en saw through his leg or arm, syn his nerves are dead while this potion lasteth.' According to William Turner, the 16th century herbalist, even the 'apples of mandrake, if a man smell of them they will make him sleep and also if they be eaten. But they that smell too much of the apples become dumb . . .'

Mandrake was administered to lunatics to quell their violence; other uses were to relieve convulsions, dull rheumatic aches and toothache, and against melancholia. It was known that large doses provoked delirium and eventual madness.

Other medico-magical powers are attributed to mandrake in early herbals; in company with periwinkle, it was useful 'for witlessness, that is devil sickness or maniacal possession', according to Apuleius Barberus, writing in about 1481. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish chronicler (1st century AD) had averred that mandrake's prime virtue was the expulsion of demons from sick people, because they could not abide its smell.

Plant in Human Form

The main mythology of mandrake concerned its forking roots, which were supposed to resemble the human body in form. The Greeks and Romans had noticed this, calling the plant *Anthropomorphon* and *Semi-homo* respectively. In the old herbals the plant is typically pictured with leaves, flowers and fruits emerging from the head of a bearded man or a long-haired woman; for there were supposed to be both male and female forms, depending on the plant's colouring and girth, sometimes called mandrake and woman-drake. Even the later, more accurate botanical drawings, such as those of Pierandrea Mattioli, drew attention to the two forms, and although not literally depicting a human body, made the roots of the plant resemble the trunk and legs of a man or woman.

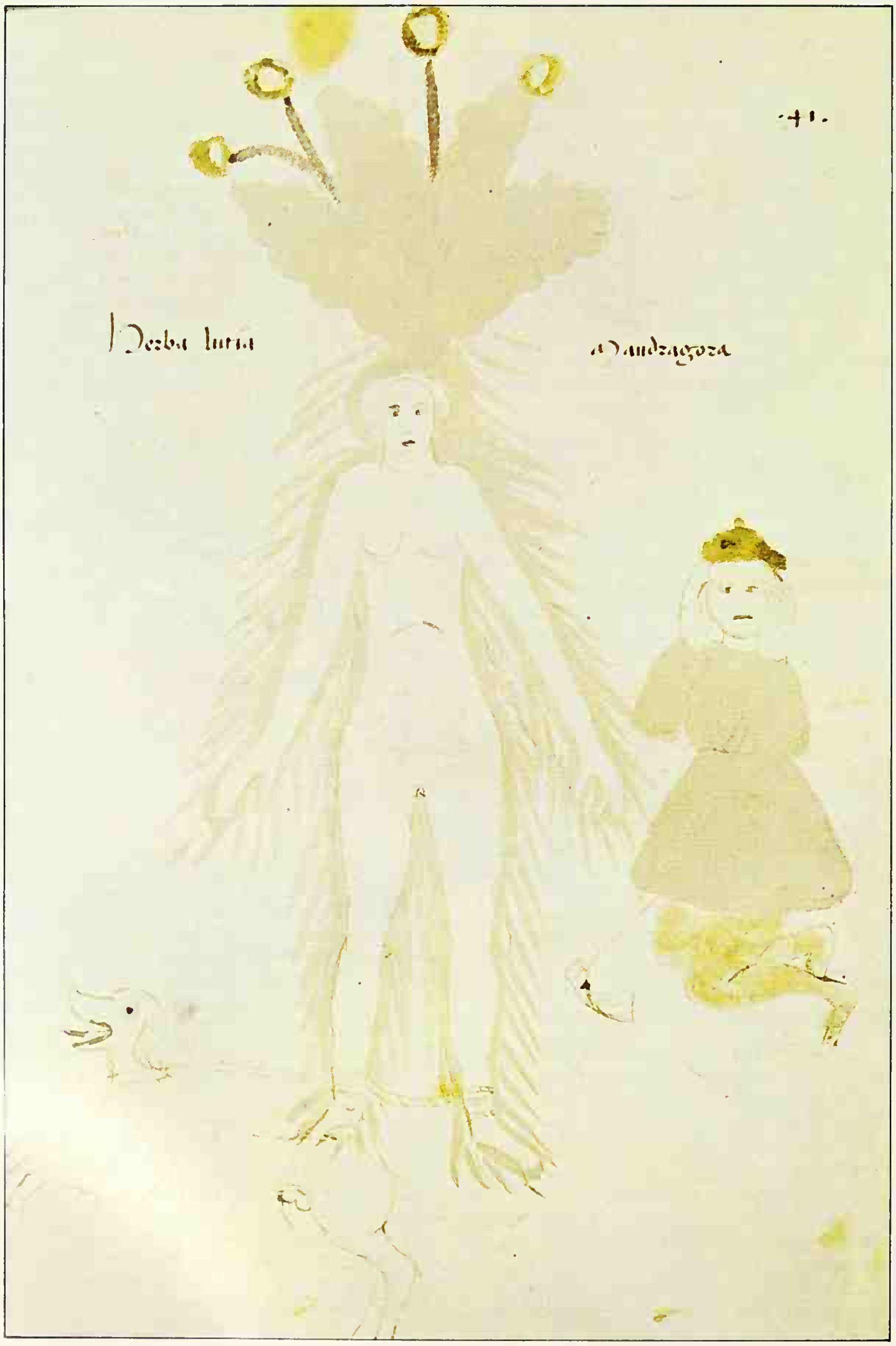
This resemblance to the human body

naturally had sexual connotations. The earliest reflection of the belief in the value of mandrake as an aphrodisiac and an aid to conception is in the biblical passage (Genesis, chapter 30) where 'in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Give me, I pray, some of your son's mandrakes." But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" Rachel said, "Then he may lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes." When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him, and said "You must come in to me; for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. And God hearkened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.'

The Arabs refer to mandrake's supposed aphrodisiac properties by calling it 'apples of jan' or 'devil's apples' because of its supposed power to excite voluptuousness, and they also believe it to help the infertile. In England, it was known as 'love-apple', a name later transferred to the tomato.

It is clear that by Shakespeare's day mandrake's aphrodisiac attributes had brought the plant into some disrepute. Falstaff refers to Justice Shallow in *Henry IV* Part 2 as 'lecherous as a monkey, and the whores call'd him mandrake'.

Even in Pliny's time, when the root's valuable properties were already known, the collecting of mandrake was accompanied by special ceremony. The herbalist had to stand with his back to the wind, draw three concentric circles around the plant with his sword, pour a libation and then, turning to the west, dig it up with his sword. The plant would otherwise flee away.



Deadly Shrieks

At some stage the mandrake became one of the Devil's plants, and to dig it up with the correct invocation meant having Satan at one's bidding. It was Josephus, apparently describing contemporary Jewish belief, who started the most notable superstition about mandrake (which incidentally it shares with the peony), which was that the root shrieked if dug up. This cry was fatal to its hearer, and the only satisfactory way of extracting the root was, after loosening the soil, to tie a cord around it, attach this to a dog, retire out of earshot and incite the dog to pull, so that the luckless animal would perish. In Bartholomew's herbal it is added that the digger should beware of contrary winds. Many accounts suggested that mandrake grew only under the gallows, where it sprang from the decaying flesh or even the dripping semen of hanged murderers.

Gerard, like Dr Turner, pours scorn upon all these tales, especially that of shrieking: 'All which dreams and old wives' tales you shall from henceforth cast out of your books and memory; knowing this, that they are all and every one of them false and most untrue; for I myself and my servants also have digged up, planted, and replanted very many . . .'

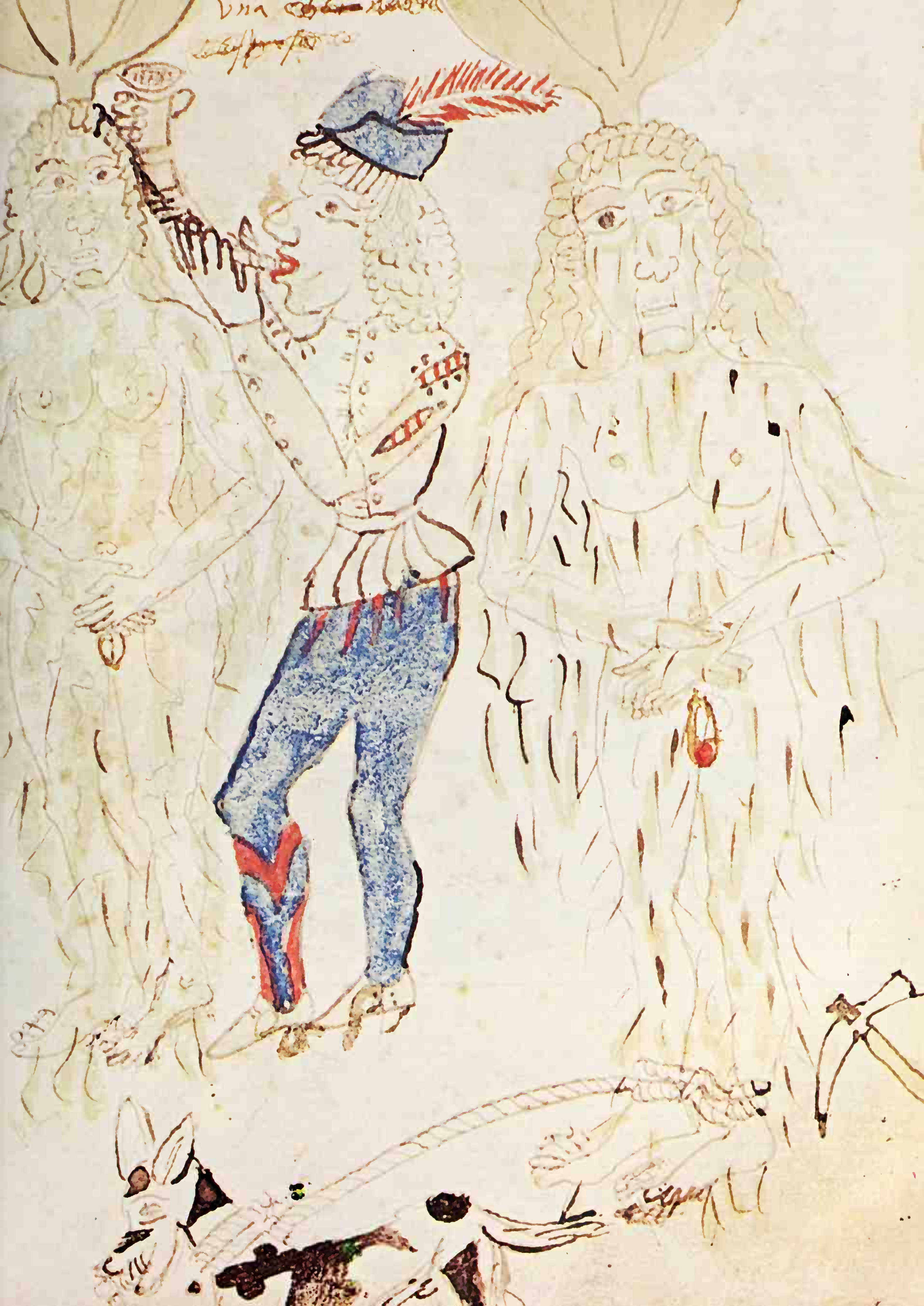
Mandrake was always a favourite ingredient of witches' potions, being specially valuable in clairvoyance and image-magic. The latter involved, to quote Coles in his *Art of Simpling*, making from a mandrake's root 'an ugly image, by which they represent the person on whom they intend to exercise their witchcraft'. A common procedure was to shoot missiles at the image, which was supposed to result in corresponding damage to the subject's anatomy.

Elf, Mannikin or Monster

In Germany the word *alruna* referred, in the time of the Goths, to both witch and mandrake, and it was the Germans who probably started the practice of making amulets or mannikins of the roots with millet grains as eyes, called alrunes and also puppets or mammets. These were carefully tended, being regularly bathed, dressed and undressed, and were consulted as oracles. Sometimes they were kept in a coffin or a secret cupboard. French peasants believed these amulet figures to be the home of an elf, called *main-de-gloire* or *magloire*. In other countries the spirit had a more

The mandrake was depicted in both male and female forms, with the long, broad leaves emerging from the head *Left* A kneeling figure holds his hands to his ears, as a female mandrake is pulled up by a dog tied to the feet: from a 15th century herbal *Right* Male and female mandrakes from a 16th century herbal: the horn is being sounded to attract the dog

Wellcome Institute


Vna

monstrous form, such as half chick and half man. If the elf or monster was fed and respected, it gave advice, multiplied riches and so on, but if it were neglected its owner would surely die.

In Italy a mannikin might be worth 30 golden ducats. Mandrake amulets were certainly imported into Britain in large numbers in the reign of Henry VIII. It was probably then that the practice began, only discontinued perhaps a century ago, of cutting fake mandrakes from the massive roots of white bryony, an English plant (see HERBS). Dr Turner mentions the practice: 'they are so trimmed of crafty thieves to mock the poor people withal and to rob them both of their wit and their money.' Lord Bacon also had something to say: 'Some plants there are . . . that have a mossy or downy root, and likewise that have a number of threads, like beards; as the Mandrakes, whereof witches and impostors do make ugly images, giving it the form of a face at the top of the root, and leave those strings to make a broad beard down to the foot.'

In some quarters to possess mandrake brought suspicion of witchcraft, and in 1630 three women of Hamburg were put to death for this reason. In 1603 the wife of a Moor was hanged at Orleans for having kept and fed a 'mandrake-fiend', said to be in the form of a female monkey.

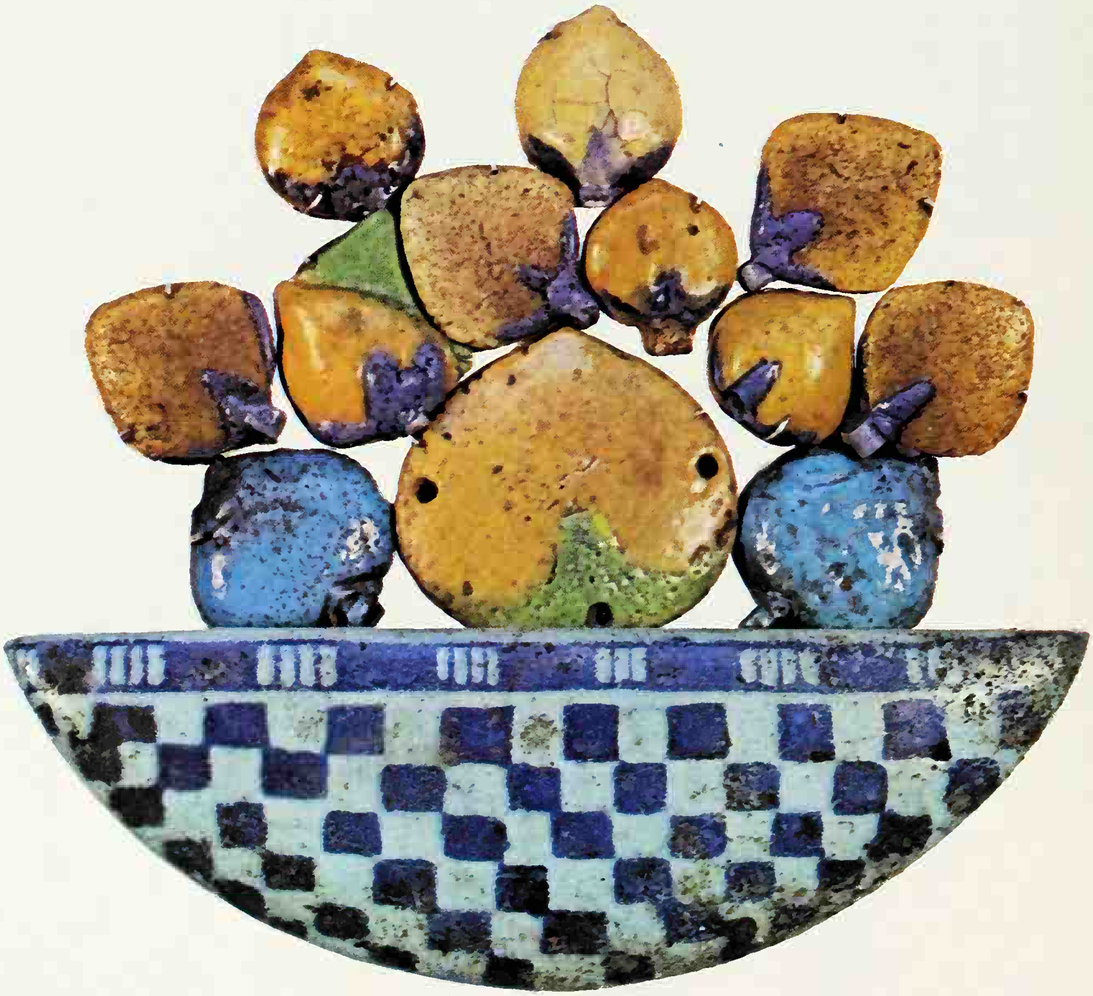
Mandrake was one of the plants reputed to be able to open locks. Another myth about it, recorded by Josephus, is that the plant's leaves shine in the dark and, if one then tries to pick them, they fly away. To this day Arabs call the plant 'devil's candles', and Thomas Moore, in *Lalla Rookh*, wrote:

Such rank and deadly lustre dwells
As in the hellish fires that light
The Mandrake's charnel leaves at night.

In the language of flowers, mandrake not surprisingly represents horror – but where would a nice Victorian maiden get one? (See also LOVE MAGIC.)

A. J. HUXLEY

Egyptian faience model of mandrake fruits in a basket: they were known as love-apples because of the plant's supposed aphrodisiac qualities, a belief reflected in Genesis



Michael Holford/British Museum

Manes

In Roman religion, the spirits of the dead; the name may be euphemistically derived from the Latin for 'good'; it came to be used for the spirit of an individual dead person but had earlier meant the dead as a collective group of divine beings, *Di Manes*; the dead had a festival in February, when they returned from the underworld to haunt the world of the living.

The Manicheans thought of themselves as living in the darkness of unconsciousness and matter, until the saving message of the doctrine appealed to them, revealed to them their real dentity and so enabled them to return to the ealm of light'

MANICHEANS

MANICHEISM was a gnostic, dualistic religion, founded by a Babylonian prince of Persian origin named Mani, who was born in 216 AD. According to the *Fihrist* of the Arabic author An Nadim, when Mani was 12 years old God sent an angel called at-Taum (twin) to him, ordering him to leave the ascetic sect to which his father belonged. When Mani was 24, this same angel appeared to him and told him that now the time had come to appear in public and proclaim his own doctrine. From Manichean sources, partly written by Mani himself, we hear more about this twin or familiar. He is said to accompany Mani and protect him. Even at the hour of death, Mani was gazing at this familiar, the one who waited for him always and opened before him the gate unto the height.

So Manicheism is based upon a special revelation, a personal experience of the founder. The 'higher Self' of Mani revealed himself to him, inspired him with the doctrine he had to proclaim to the world, protected him during his missionary journeys and awaited him at his death to bring him to the eternal realm of Light. Sometimes this Self is described in Christian terms: then t is designated Christ or the Holy Spirit. This is the case in Western sources, especially in the Coptic Psalms discovered at Medinet-Madi in Egypt, in 1931. The problem is whether we should interpret the experience of Mani in a Christian or in an Iranian perspective (as is supposed by G. Widengren and L. J. R. Ort).

The concept that man has a spiritual double or twin appears in the Greek author Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* (2nd century AD); according to him the 'shadow' (*eidolon)* of Heracles was his exact image and counterpart, his twin. In other sources it is stated that the 'daimon' or attendant spirit of a man is his image. This influenced the Jewish religion of the time, according to which the guardian angel was the *iqonin*, the image of the man to whom he belonged. (See also DOUBLE; GUARDIAN SPIRITS.)

Through Judaism the concept was ntegrated into Christianity, where we find t at a very early date, allegedly already in the community of Jerusalem (Acts 12.15). From there it seems to have spread in many directions, especially to the Syriac Christianty of Edessa in Mesopotamia. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, written there about 140 AD, the guardian angel is called ikon, image, the eternal counterpart of man. In the *Song of the Pearl*, contained in the *Acts of Thomas*, also originating from Edessa (c 225 AD), the encounter with the Self is described as the encounter with the eternal Garment, which s the mirror of its owner: 'for we were two in distinction, and yet again one in one likeness.' In the same *Acts of Thomas* the apostle Thomas is called the twin of Christ.

Mani seems to have known Christianity mainly in its Syriac form. He knew the *Gospel of Thomas* and he may very well have known the *Acts of Thomas*. From Syriac Christianity, which was strongly encratitic (prohibiting marriage, wine and meat) he may have taken his severe asceticism, according to which the fall of Adam was his intercourse with Eve, and marriage as such is sinful. So Mani's religious experience, the revelation of the twin, which is the Holy Spirit, can be understood in a Christian perspective.

Christianity in Edessa, however, was not exclusively encratitic. Before the sect of Encratites, Jewish Christianity had come to the city, possibly from Jerusalem (see EBIONITES). These Jewish Christians called themselves Nazorees or Nazarenes, as the Syrian Christians did later on. The Manichean *Kephalaia* preserves a debate of Mani with a Nazoree about the problem of whether God, as judge, is not necessarily bound to use evil when he punishes. The implication seems to be that, according to this Nazoree, God was the origin of both good and evil.

Mani's abhorrence of the doctrine that God creates evil was one of the sources, and possibly the main source, of his absolute dualism. According to Mani, evil was Satan or Matter, not a god, as in Persian religion (see AHRIMAN). This did not prevent Mani from taking over certain views of the Jewish Christians. During his trial, which ended with his death, he proclaimed solemnly that he had received his doctrine from God through the intermediary of an angel. So according to him, his twin and familiar, the Paraclete ('Counsellor') or Holy Spirit, was an angel. This of course is in disagreement with orthodox Christianity, but can be found in the very archaic *Ascension of Isaiah*. Similarly, in the *Manual of Discipline*, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Angel of Light (possibly Michael) is called Holy Spirit and Spirit of Truth. On the other hand, Mani called Christ 'the right hand': this he must have taken from Jewish Christians, who used the same terminology. Of course, Mani took the designation Paraclete from St John's gospel (14.16) but the fact that he considers this Paraclete to be an angel seems to hint at familiarity with Jewish Christians in Mesopotamia.

Mani in India

Mani considered Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus as his predecessors. He visited north-western India and during his missionary trips in the Persian Empire, favoured by King Shapur I, he must have become thoroughly familiar with the Iranian religion. If he died in prison (possibly in 274 AD) owing to the hostility of the official magians (fire-priests) who influenced King Bahram I, this does not mean that he did not integrate Iranian religious concepts into his system.

It is not quite clear which elements in Mani's religion are Iranian or Buddhist, mainly because it is not clear what these religions taught at that period. Later Buddhism of north-western India, mother of Tibetan and Zen Buddhism, had very little in common with original Buddhism and may have been influenced by western Gnosticism. But Mani was probably inspired by Buddhism to respect the suffering life of the particles of light mixed up with matter (see below), and perhaps drew the idea of reincarnation from this source. From Iranian religion he may have taken his absolute dualism, the opposition of light and darkness; this he combined with the gnostic dualism of spirit and matter, and equated with the opposition of God and Satan.

Yet all these influences do not explain the unmistakably gnostic character of Manicheism. It has been established that Mani was familiar with the views of the Mandeans, a baptist sect still existing in Iraq, most probably originating from Palestine and possibly already then living in southern Babylonia. It seems plausible that the sect of the Mughtasila (Baptists), to which Mani's father belonged, was a sort of Mandean or Proto-Mandean sect.

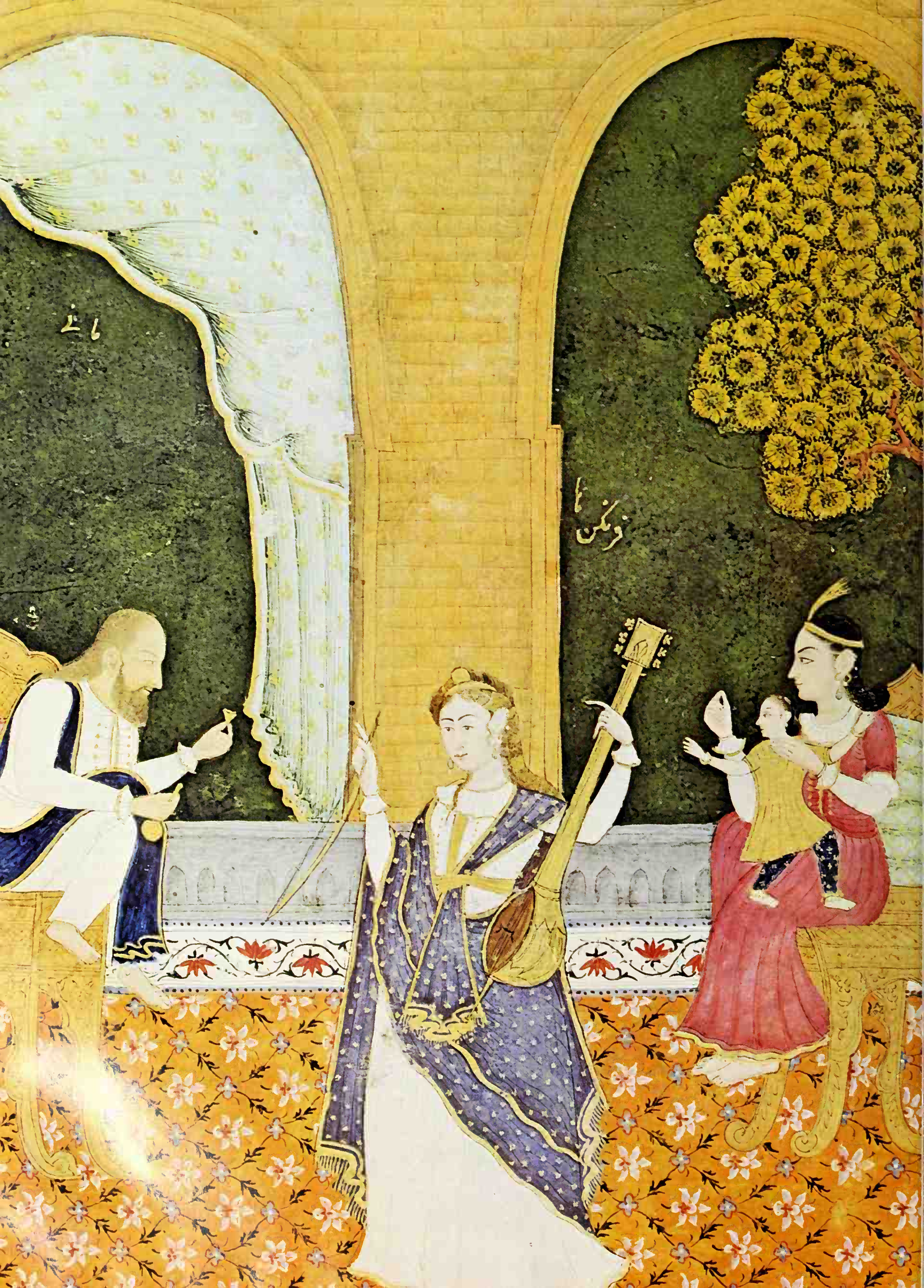
The difficulty is that the Mughtasila are said to have been strongly encratitic, whereas the Mandeans are not, and never seem to have been. Moreover it is not certain that the Mandeans, now a gnostic sect, were already then gnostic to the same extent as they are now. And Manicheism has certain gnostic elements which seem to be absent from Mandeism. The god of this world, the demiurge, is called in Manichean sources Saklon or Saklas. This goes back to Saklas (Aramaic for 'fool'), which is the name for the Jewish god and creator of the world in the gnostic Apocryphon of John (early 2nd century), but has no parallel in Mandean sources.

Man the Work of Darkness

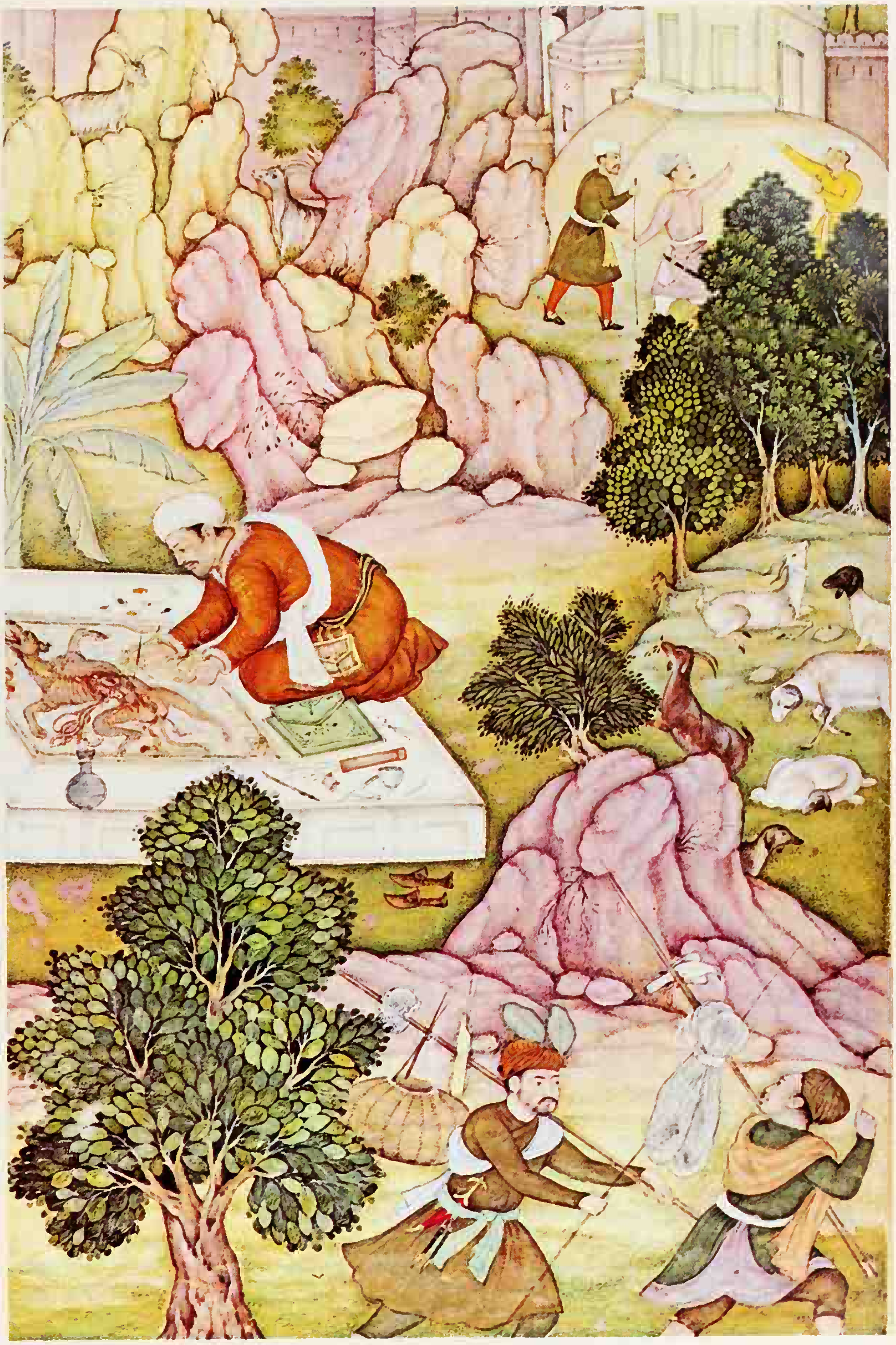
This Saklas, the ruler of darkness, together with his subjects, creates Adam after the image of the primal man, created by God. In the same way, in the Apocryphon of John, Saklas and his powers fashion Adam after the idea of God, his image, also called first man, who revealed his reflected image in the water of chaos. It is even said, in Manichean sources and in the Apocryphon of John, that Saklas made Adam after the image of God and after the image of himself and his fellows, so that man is a microcosm of everything: 'Come! Let us make a man according to the image of God and according to our likeness.' This, of course, ultimately goes back to the *Timaeus* of Plato, where God contributes only the divine part of man, the soul, and leaves it to lower gods to fashion the mortal part of man. But the concept must have reached Mani through gnostic channels. (See also FIRST MAN.)

There must be some relationship between Mani and the various gnostic schools and currents of the 2nd century, quite apart from Mandeism. But at the moment we cannot be more specific, because the history of these sects in eastern Syria and Mesopotamia is almost completely obscure. This problem may come nearer to a solution when all the gnostic manuscripts found at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt have been published.

There is no doubt that Manicheism is a gnostic religion. It has a gnostic conception of man (as a divine spark), of the world (as



Left Though the Manicheans regarded all sexual relations as inherently sinful, women were not discriminated against but were eligible to join the highest ranks of the movement. Mani appears on the left of this 18th century Persian miniature *Right* Another miniature illustrates an incident in the life of Mani, a Babylonian prince of Persian origin and the founder of Manicheism. The glass cover over a water-tank was continually being broken by the women who came to draw water, so Mani drew attention to the glass by painting a picture of a dead dog on it


British Museum

a product of failure) and of God (as the suffering God), which is expressed in a systematic and consistent myth. Because this myth is so extremely complicated, even in the abridged form which we offer here, it is perhaps right to remember that according to Franz Cumont and Henri-Charles Puech the myth reflects and expresses the 'Self-experience' of Mani himself.

The Suffering God

From the very beginning, so the myth says, before heaven and earth and everything contained therein came into being, there were two principles, a good one and an evil one, the realm of light and the realm of darkness. In the realm of light dwells God, 'the father of greatness'. In Eastern sources he is called the 'four-faced God', because with his light, his power and his wisdom he forms a sort of quaternity.

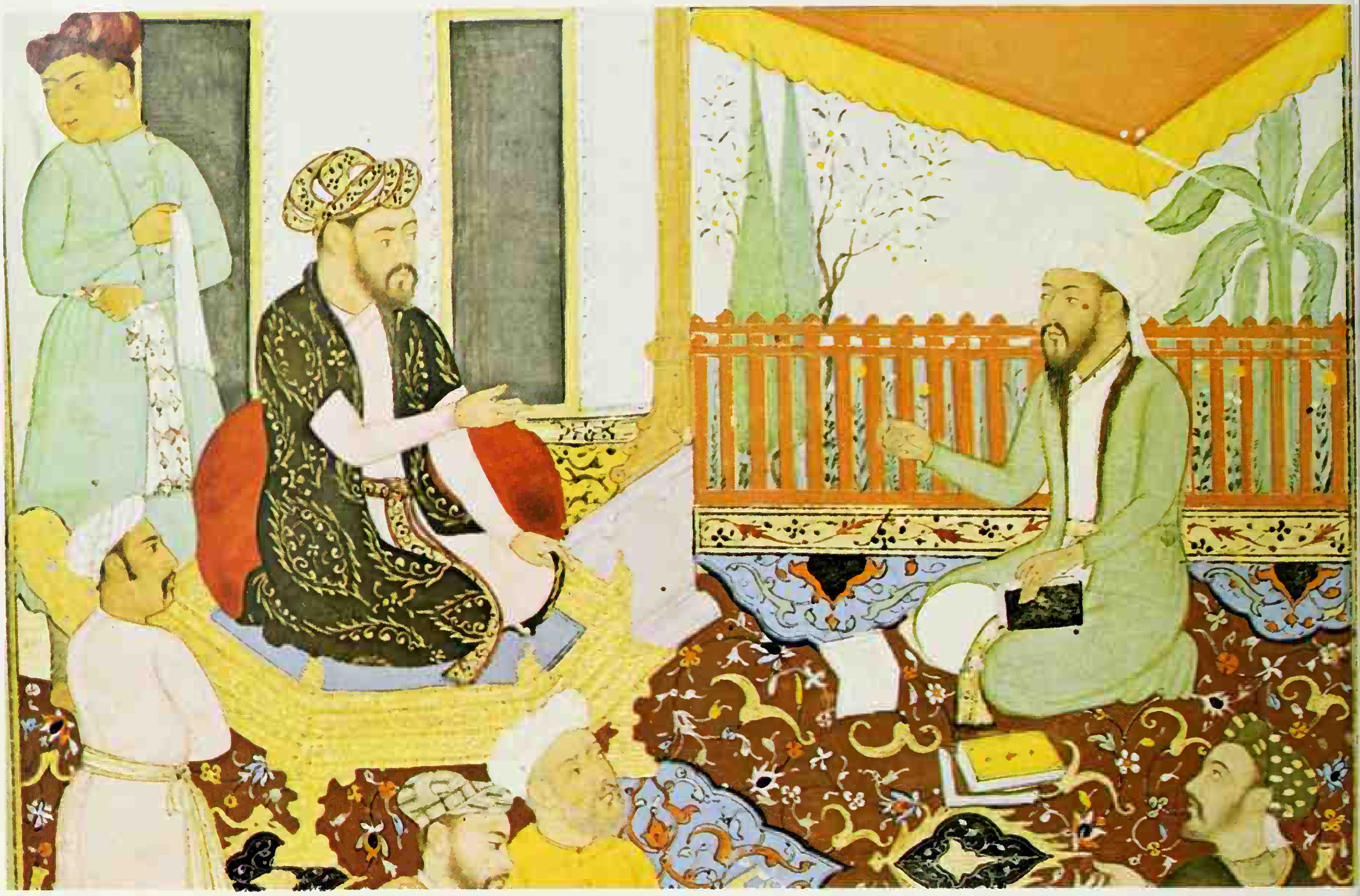
In the realm of the dark dwells the king of the dark. He arose from his domain to invade the realm of light. Then God decided to go out and fight the battle against the invading forces. Thereupon 'the father of greatness evoked the mother of life and the mother of life evoked the primal man.' When God sends out the primal man, he is really going himself. The primal man and all the other light-figures of Manicheism are qualifications and manifestations of God himself. When the lost part of primal man, called Jesus patibilis (suffering Jesus), is said to hang on every tree, we should understand that it is God himself who is crucified in the world of darkness.

We have here a conception of God akin to, but not identical with, that of Christian theology. It is essentially gnostic. In the recently discovered *Gospel of Philip* it is said that the heavenly Christ saved his own soul, which he had lost since the beginning of the world. The idea of this Valentinian author is that the fall of divine wisdom (Sophia), through which this world came into being, is essentially a split within the godhead itself. The divine element is dispersed in matter and God, when saving man, is saving himself. This astonishing conception of the suffering God is not to be found in India, Iran or Israel. It seems to have its prototype in the Greek myth of Zagreus-Dionysus, who was torn in pieces by the Titans (see DIONYSUS; ORPHEUS).

It is this gnostic and ultimately hellenistic concept of God suffering in the world and in man which the Manichean myth tries to expound, in the following way. The primal man, in his glorious armour of the 'five bright elements', went forth to repel the forces of darkness. But this fight ended in defeat and the primal man was left in the darkness in a state of unconsciousness. On the other hand, it was a sort of divine sacrifice, for in this way the primal man could also serve as bait to catch the forces of darkness, so as to assuage them and to prevent their attack upon the realm of light. When the primal man recovered from his swoon, he entreated the father of greatness to come to his support. From above he received 'the call', conceived as a spiritual being. To this he gave 'the answer', also a spiritual being. Thereupon the primal man returned to the realm of light, but had to leave his armour behind.

The adventures of the primal man are described in great detail in the Coptic Manichean Psalms, which show us how this myth reflected the situation of every Manichean. They too were living in the darkness of unconsciousness and matter, until the saving message of the doctrine appealed to them, revealed to them their real identity and so enabled them to return to the realm of light. A similar conception of salvation, and a similar myth, is found in 2nd century Gnosticism, especially in the documents from the school of Valentinus.

Here, the perfect man is Jesus. He leaves his 'members' behind in the world, to be formed by their life in history and to discover their own identity. The end of the world-process is achieved when all spiritual elements have returned to their origin above. In the same way, the Manichean primal man



returns to the realm of light, but leaves behind his armour, also called his members or his soul.

This shows that scholars (including G. Widengren and R. Bultmann) who interpreted Manicheism as a myth of 'the saved saviour' were right. They were wrong when they supposed that Mani took this idea directly from Iranian religion. Before him the Valentinian Gnostic had a similar conception, which seems inspired by St Paul's view that the Church is the body of Christ, and by a Jewish myth that Adam regained Paradise.

Seal of the Prophets

The elements of light which had been absorbed by darkness had still to be delivered. To this end, the world was created as a mixture of spirit and matter. The myth here becomes very obscure and obscene. By a strange mixture of generation and cannibalism Adam and Eve were brought forth by Saklon (the Jewish god). 'Jesus Splendour' aroused Adam from his sleep, so that Adam became conscious of himself.

This process was continued during the whole history of mankind. Ever and again, messengers were sent to remind men of the divine spark in them. Such apostles were Sethel (Seth, the son of Adam), Enosh, Enoch, Shem, the son of Noah; Buddha in the East, Zoroaster in Persia, Jesus in the West. But their doctrines were not complete and soon after their death were corrupted by their pupils.

Mani admitted that Jesus revealed himself in Palestine at the beginning of our era to reveal the gnosis to man, though the body of Jesus was not held to be material. He admired St Paul but he held the Church to have disappeared completely ('a tree without fruits') in his own lifetime. Therefore the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth promised by Jesus, had been sent to Mani, who was called to reveal the definite and consummate gnosis. For that reason Mani styled himself 'the apostle of Jesus Christ' and 'the seal of the prophets'. He must have thought that he lived in the last generation of mankind, before the final separation of light and darkness. Then the 'earth of light', the abode of God and all the saved, would be healed of the wound inflicted upon it by the attack of darkness. The earth would be destroyed by fire, the powers of evil would be confined within their original domain, and unrepentant sinners would be compacted together in a great round clod, the *globus*. At last the realm of light would enjoy an eternal peace, no longer endangered by any attack of darkness. Dualism in the end will be permanent.

Mani expounding his theories: he considered Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus as his predecessors, calling himself 'the apostle of Jesus Christ' and 'seal of the prophets'; gnostic influence is also evident in his teachings

In order to realize the duality of man and his higher Self, Mani had to postulate a highly dualistic philosophy. And this is understandable, because the unity of the innermost man with his heavenly Self, according to Mani, is only possible when man is ready to reject everything material.

Manicheism spread in the West, where the young St Augustine was attracted to the sect, until it was completely suppressed by the combined forces of Church and State in c 600 AD. In the East, especially outside the Roman Empire, it flourished in spite of persecutions and remained for a thousand years one of the main religions of Asia. The medieval sects of the Bogomils and Cathars had much in common with Manicheism (see BOGOMILS; CATHARS). The Cathars owed much to the Bogomils of Bulgaria, who in turn originated from the Armenian Paulicians and perhaps the Syrian Messalians. Neither Paulicians nor Messalians were Manichees and we have no evidence that Manichees were active in the Byzantine Empire at the time the Bogomils entered history. But the 'medieval Manichees' were so similar to the 'classic Manichees', that perhaps in the future some missing link will be discovered.

(See also DUALISM; GNOSTICISM.)

(Since this article was written a Greek papyrus has been discovered, which tells us explicitly that to the age of 25 Mani was a member of the Jewish Christian sect of the Elchesaites in the south of Babylonia.)

G. QUISPEL

FURTHER READING: F. C. Burkitt, *The Religion of the Manichees* (Cambridge University Press, 1925); H.-C. Puech, *Le Manichéisme* (Paris, 1969, 2nd edition); G. Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* (Weidenfeld, 1965).

MANITOU

MANITOU was the term used by North American Indians of the Algonquin group for spirit beings and for the supernatural and magical power contained in all the phenomena of Nature, 'the secret life of every created thing'. It was the business of shamans, or medicine-men, to make contact with the world of the manitous, and the Midewiwin, the secret society of shamans, was believed to have been founded by manitous (see ALGONQUIN INDIANS).

All sorts of beings, objects or forces could be classed as manitou. Among the Fox tribe, for instance, the term has been applied to spirits and heroes, snakes and plants, cars and trains, to the turtle dove because its calls resemble the voices of manitous, and to the dog, which is ceremonially eaten in order to get in touch with manitous. A manitou might also be the guardian spirit of a person, taking the form of an animal and revealing itself in a dream.

Perhaps as a result of Christian influence, there was also a belief in a Great Manitou or supreme spirit. He generally had little contact with men and, though always present in the background, was of less immediate concern than the lesser spirits who were involved in everyday life. The Delaware said that the Great Manitou founded the ritual of smoking the pipe of peace.

Cinema Center Films

An Indian invokes the manitous: scene from the film *A Man Called Horse*

A conspiracy of the rich was the root of all evil and prevented humanity from living in material and spiritual abundance. This was the ideology of Mankind United, a Californian sect that flourished in the 1930s especially among those disenchanted with established religion

MANKIND UNITED

THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS movement called Mankind United was the creation of Arthur L. Bell, an American businessman. Although little is known of his earlier career, Bell claimed to have been born in New Hampshire in 1900, to have grown up in poverty and to have completed only four years of school. Emigrating to California in his teens, he sold real estate and insurance during the booming '20s and became a Christian Science practitioner and a devotee of various theological and Utopian writings. He was badly hit by the economic crash of 1929, and subsequently divorced his first wife and married, at the age of 34, a fellow Christian Scientist – a wealthy woman in her early 60s.

Evil of Mad Ambition

Financially supported by his wife, Bell conceived the movement and at his own expense published its text, *Mankind United*, (1934). In its 313 repetitious pages, Bell sought to answer the ancient questions of why the world is dominated by war, poverty, greed and hate, when so many long for it to be otherwise; and how it might be changed so that everyone could live in economic abundance and happiness under the Golden Rule of Christ: 'Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them' (Matthew 7. 12).

According to the text, on Christmas Day 1875, a small group of wealthy and humane persons had assembled to ask themselves these same questions. In their opinion, poverty, war and other evils were totally unnecessary since technology was capable of producing more than enough for all. These evils continued only because 'a worldwide organization composed of a small group of families in possession of fabulous wealth' was stifling the economic and moral well-being of mankind in order to bring it to total enslavement. In their mad ambition to control all wealth and power, these 'World's Hidden Rulers' or 'Money Changers' were the root of all evil.

Wanting to save mankind, this group pledged their fortunes and lives to overcoming the Money Changers and to instituting a world economy of equality and abundance. They called their organization The International Institute of Universal Research and Administration. Bell referred to them, more simply, as 'the Sponsors'.

In the following years, the Sponsors gradually expanded their numbers, spied upon the Money Changers and engaged in the development of fantastically advanced techniques of economic production. Since the World's Hidden Rulers would destroy the Sponsors if they knew of them, the latter had to work in secrecy.

By 1919, the Sponsors' research department had assembled exhaustive proof of the Money Changers' existence and nefarious aims, and had worked out a plan for a world-wide economy in which, working only four hours a day, four days a week, eight months a year, everyone could live in astonishing prosperity. Since then they had been waiting for the most propitious moment to make their discoveries and plans known, and to prepare for this 'unveiling' the Sponsors had formed a group called the International Legion of Vigilantes. Bell claimed that he was recruited to this organization when it was set up in 1919 and that by 1934 he had been working as a secret agent for 15 years.

30 Days of Proof

Recognizing that their claims might seem incredible to the public at large, the Sponsors planned a rapid 30-day programme 'during which time the Institute's well-guarded sixty years of discoveries and carefully prepared recommendations will be freely offered to the human race.' In two-hour programmes repeated day and night, 12 times each 24 hours, five days a week, irrefutable and exhaustive proof would be offered as to how the Money Changers worked and how Utopia was possible.

The book *Mankind United* was merely a 'bulletin' announcing the imminence of the 30 days of proof. It did not in itself offer proof of anything, but was intended as an 'invitation' to those who saw it to take part in the 30 days, and at the end to vote on 100 recommendations. However, the Sponsors had determined that if the enormous power of the Money Changers was to be overcome, it would be necessary to have at least 200 million people listening and voting. Until that number had agreed to participate, the 30 days of proof could not begin. It was in order to register the requisite millions that a part of the Sponsors' secret organization had become public. Once the 200 million had voted for the Sponsors' programme, the Universal Service Corporation would be formed and would thereafter conduct all economic production and distribution. Membership in the corporation would increase rapidly, and within a few years the World's Hidden Rulers would be completely out of business.

Arthur L. Bell, the argument of the text continued, was selected by the Sponsors to be the first 'public' vigilante, and California was to be the first area in which registration was to occur. In his role as a mere functionary of a large and powerful secret organization, Bell disclaimed the authorship of *Mankind United*, and the title page proclaimed that the book was 'published by the International Registration Bureau (Pacific Coast Division of North America)'.

Equipped with his wife's money, an ideology and an attractive physical presence, Bell set out to build a movement. It was to have an active life of only 17 years (1934-51), but it provides an intriguing study in the ingenious responses of a leader to changing and adverse circumstances.

Promise of Utopia

During the 1930s California, deep in the depression, was overrun with salvationist schemes. It was into this highly competitive market that Bell introduced Mankind United. Membership involved merely the purchase of the book, a promise to pass it on to friends, and a willingness to listen and vote during the forthcoming 30-day programme. In return for this minimal effort, members were promised a fantastic future gain. At the height of the movement's popularity, in 1938-39, frequent mass meetings were held throughout California and it is estimated that upwards of a quarter of a million West Coast citizens read the book, registered themselves, and attended at least a few meetings. Bell encouraged the formation of local clubs dedicated to promoting the book and, as they grew in numbers, Bell organized them into an elaborate bureaucracy of dedicated workers. As many as 30,000 were actively engaged in the goal of registering 200 million 'educated and religious people' – precisely the people, Bell said, whom the Money Changers most urgently wanted to annihilate.

The bulk of the membership was drawn from the working and lower 'white-collar' classes, was primarily between the ages of 40 and 60, and had completed some secondary education. Females slightly outnumbered males. By and large, the members came from those worst hit by the depression – groups who were neither poor in 1929 nor sufficiently wealthy to weather the decade in reasonable comfort. More specifically, Bell sponsored his movement among those portions of such groups that were religiously inclined but disenchanted with established religion. His doctrines were as much economic as religious but his scheme to make 'do as you would be done by' a reality on earth was promoted among persons who were more religious than they were economically or politically sophisticated.

Levy of Half Their Income

When war came to the United States in 1941, Bell condemned it as another of the Money Changers' plots to worsen mankind's situation. Communist, Fascist and capitalist leaders alike were merely puppets of the Money Changers, and the latter were pulling the strings to further their plan for world dictatorship. By 1939 the Federal authorities had infiltrated the movement and Bell had begun to retrench by discontinuing sale of the book and insisting upon the close screening of members.

As support for the American government increased, membership declined, and in response Bell instituted a series of measures designed to commit the remaining followers. A programme to train 'instructors' and 'election supervisors' to conduct affairs during the imminent 30-day programme was instituted. Initially this involved a payment of only $20 per member, but a variety of other monetary requests followed. These culminated in a requirement made in 1943 that members become part of the '50-50 fund' by giving 50% of their gross earnings to the movement. The successive demands were made in the context of extreme secrecy and urgency: the 30-day programme would begin at any moment, if only the latest monetary goal could be reached. But each time, Bell announced, the members failed and each time he sent them headlong toward a new financial goal which had to be achieved if the War was to be prevented (in 1940-41) or stopped (1942-43), and Utopia begun.

In pursuit of these elusive monetary goals and in scurrying about on a variety of additional and inexplicable 'missions' at Bell's bidding, the members lived with an inflated sense of self-importance and a vivid sense of the urgency of their tasks. The extent of this 'urgency' was made clear in December 1942 when Bell and 16 leaders were arrested on charges of sedition. They were found guilty in May 1943 but, following appeal, the decision was reversed on procedural grounds four years later. None of them actually ever served any time in prison.

The best defence being offence, in the face of declining membership and government prosecution, Bell adopted a bold but logical strategy to save and consolidate the movement. Late in 1943, he announced to the membership the 'literally unheard-of opportunity' to become 'student ministers' in 'training schools' for those who would form the foundation of the forthcoming Universal Service Corporation. Incorporating a new organization, Christ's Church of the Golden Rule, Bell pressed his followers to give over all their worldly goods to the Church and to begin work in one of the large number of businesses he was in the process of acquiring.

Under two years later, by the summer of 1945, he had assembled nearly $4 million worth of property in California, including a number of office buildings, hotels, ranches, laundries, garages and the like. Bell's following, however, was now down to about 850 persons, so that only part of these vast new holdings were run by members as Utopian 'Laboratories of Abundant Living'. Bell gradually faded from public view. Members grew few and old, operating a few remaining businesses, among which was a laundry and a motel. By 1956, less than a hundred members remained faithful and the end of Mankind United was reached.

JOHN LOFLAND

MATTHEW MANNING

BORN IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE in 1955, Matthew Manning has become famous as 'the most scientifically investigated healer in the world'. His first paranormal experiences came at the age of 12, when the Cambridge poltergeist investigator, Dr A.R.G. Owen, concluded that the young Matthew was the focus of some of the most interesting poltergeist activity he had ever encountered.

This type of disturbance, which followed Matthew to boarding-school, continued intermittently for several years. At 16, he found that he could write and draw automatically (see AUTOMATIC ART), producing drawings in the style of – and in some cases apparently signed by – such artists as Dürer, Beardsley, Matisse and Picasso. His automatic writing included languages with which he had no known familiarity, such as Greek and Arabic.

In 1974 Manning saw a television broadcast by Uri Geller (see GELLER), following which he also was able to demonstrate metal-bending. Such a wealth of paranormal talent attracted media attention, and in the same year he was examined by a panel of scientists. Three years later he took part in an extensive series of tests at the Mind Science Foundation in San Antonio, the University of California at Davis, and the Washington Research Center in San Francisco. Dr William Braud, who supervised the Texas research, subsequently reported in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (1979) that 'Matthew Manning was able to exert significant psychokinetic influences upon a variety of biological systems.'

It was while on holiday in the Himalayas during the course of these experiments that Manning took the decision to become a healer, a profession he followed ever since. In 1983 he was asked to explain his technique to the Royal College of Surgeons in London. He said: 'I just give people permission to heal themselves...If there is any outside help, I just say it comes "from the boys and girls upstairs".'

The essence of a spell or mantra lies in its sound; the vibrations that can penetrate into the inner layer of the mind and have power to 'create, sustain and destroy'

MANTRA

THE WORD 'SPELL' is perhaps the nearest approach to the meaning of the Sanskrit word *mantra*. It is a form of words or sounds which are believed to have a magical effect when uttered with intent. The term is related to an Iranian word which signifies a formula whose repetition dispels disease and brings blessings.

Essentially, the mantra is a sound. A sound is a vibration, and when we consider that the family of vibrations includes not only the things we hear but all material objects seen (which may be said to be patterns of vibrations), we can appreciate why the magician has always laid great emphasis on words of power. Sound is the foundation of all magic, and an armoury of mantras forms part of the equipment of the magician in all countries.

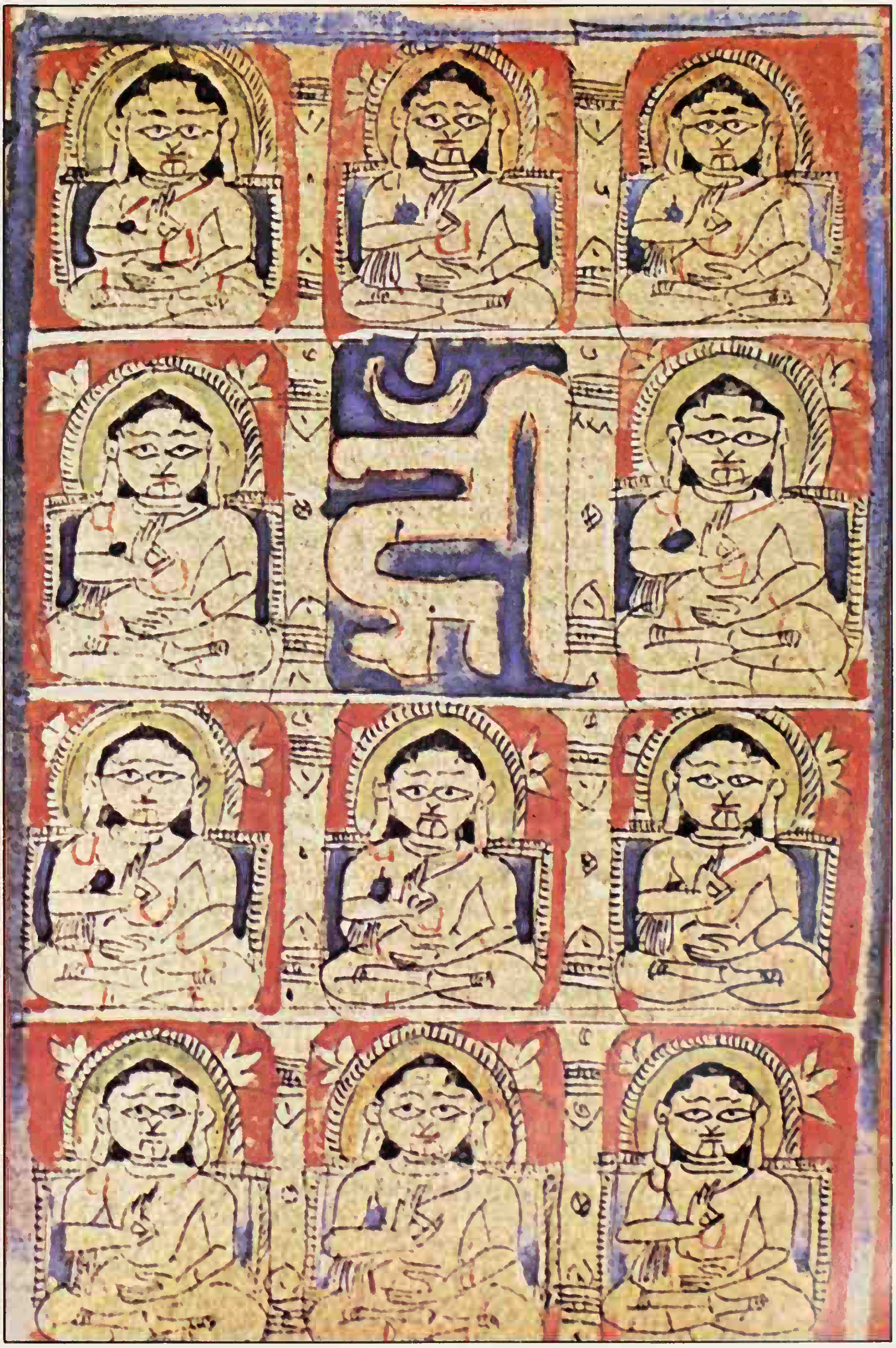
Mantras can create, sustain and destroy. The ancients believed that miracles could be performed by means of magical formulas, and they made extravagant claims for the powers of such formulas. The Latin writer Apuleius said that by properly intoning spells rapid streams could be made to flow backwards, the surface of the sea could be congealed, and the winds robbed of breath. An ancient legend tells us that the priests of the sacred city of On (Heliopolis, in Egypt) raised up the stones to build their temples with the aid of sound. Hindu manuals speak of mantras that can cause prepared sacrificial fuel to burst into flame or compel wild beasts to stop in their tracks.

Certain mantras have a long history. Some are traditionally held to be revealed by the deities themselves, whose name vibrations are latent within them, so that a god can be summoned, or at any rate his power drawn down, by uttering his particular mantra. The mantra in this case represents more than a sound, it is the vibration of the divine emanation; the deity is identified with it, and like the deity it remains eternal. A number of other Sanskrit mantras are said to be 'recovered' from the ether through the meditation of *rishis* (or sages). These are the vibrations governing the processes of Nature, and a knowledge of them gives one ascendancy over natural phenomena. Whenever such a mantra is uttered a Nature force is set in motion, vibrant with efficacy, and the mantra in this case is regarded as an entity in its own right.

Another class of mantras fall into the self-illuminating category and play an important role in initiation ceremonies, for they impart wisdom as soon as they are communicated. One legend relates that a pupil after long study was given such a mantra of initiation by his guru, to provide the final illumination to the teachings he had received. When the guru uttered the mantra a workman who happened to be busy in the next room overheard it. Unlettered and ignorant though he was, the workman was enlightened with the full understanding of the doctrine, just as though he had undergone the full discipline of the pupil.

Some Hindu and Buddhist mantras are regarded as extremely dangerous if uttered incorrectly or with misplaced intent. They are thought to create repercussions not only in the present life but in the future incarnations of the individual as well. Such mantras require a very precise knowledge of their pronunciation, intonation and timing, and frequently several days' preparation and purificatory rituals before they can be uttered.

In India there is a belief that every sorcerer is in possession of a mantra of terrible malignancy which is the source and focus of his success and power. Such a mantra can be known to only one person at a time, and it is this last bearer of the knowledge who possesses the power of the mantra. As the time of his death approaches it begins to build up a terrifying tension and becomes an unbearable burden on the mind of the magician, causing him untold anguish. It is said that the magician cannot die until he has passed on the mantra to someone else. Stories are told of magicians of great



Jain painting from a manuscript of 1460 shows the mystic symbol of the mantra 'Hrim', surrounded by the disciples of the teacher Mahavira; repeated often enough, a mantra 'can penetrate the dense barrier of the material sphere and draw power from the occult plane'

R. Skelton

repute dragging out their end in excruciating torment in a state of living death because they could not unburden themselves of the mantra, since they were unable to find anyone willing to accept the secret from them, even though it bestowed material benefits.

Mantras often appear to be no more than meaningless gibberish, which of course may only point to the fact that they are relics of an earlier language whose meaning is lost to the present users of the spell. Since the value of a spell lies in its antiquity, a meaningless mantra will be handed down in succession from master to pupil for generations as a treasured inheritance, and will never be altered. The Babylonians inherited certain magical formulas in Akkadian from earlier inhabitants of Mesopotamia. These formulas were couched in a 'dead' language, unintelligible to them, but were still handed down unchanged for centuries. Such 'barbarous names of evocation' as they have been called, are known even in the West. Abracadabra is one example (see ABRACADABRA). Indeed, the very word 'mantra' in colloquial Sinhalese means something very much like gibberish or hocus-pocus. It has long been believed that unintelligible or half-intelligible words in meditation help in creating a 'numinous' or transcendental mood, which makes its appeal to a hidden layer of our minds directly connected with some unknown force within ourselves that is tuned to another dimension. The real power of the mantra resides in its effect on the invisible world. A mantra repeated often enough can penetrate the dense barrier of the material sphere and draw power from the occult planes.

The most potent mantras are those embodied in a 'seed', or in monosyllabic form, and such seed mantras are held to be the quintessence of complex teachings. For instance, an elaborate doctrine of occult knowledge set forth in a work of 100,000 verses can be reduced by a rishi to a single short chapter; this may be further condensed into a single verse; and the verse finally concentrated into a single syllable. This syllable if correctly transmitted to a pupil can, it is thought, communicate to him the substance of the entire doctrine contained in the 100,000 verses.

Basically a seed mantra must be one that can be prolonged indefinitely when voiced, and because of this requirement such mantras are generally built around the vowel sounds or the humming sounds, such as 'm' or 'n', all of which can be sustained when uttered, unlike most consonants which can only be voiced in a single burst of sound. Vowel sounds seem to have been used in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, and the seven vowel sounds of their alphabet were used by the Greeks as a magic invocation.

Humming mantras are said to derive their potency from the cerebral intoxication induced by the vibrations of the sound. The constant resonances in the head chambers in this form of intonation lead to a kind of intoxication which results in trance. Such mantras are ideal for magical purposes. They are easy to remember, and when correctly intoned can set up reverberations in the cranium which continue long after the audible recitation of the sound has ceased. Those proficient in the art need utter a mantra only a few times for it to continue its overtones independently for hours thereafter.

Supreme among the seed mantras is of course the well-known monosyllable 'Om'. But its secret is so securely and tightly knit that it might take an aspirant more than a single lifetime of disciplined training to unravel and secure it for himself. Assiduous application, solitary meditation and superhuman concentration are prerequisites for its acquisition. It is said to contain the ultimate formula for universal knowledge and universal power.

(See also INCANTATION; VIBRATION.)

BENJAMIN WALKER

The Power of Repetition

Unlimited powers are said to reside in the shorter mantras, especially the mystic syllables known as *bijakshara* (monosyllabic) mantras, and great benefits accrue from their repetition. . . . The most powerful of all is the sound *Om*. There are, however, many other classes of short mantras. Many of the exclamations and ejaculations used during the sacrificial ceremonies have passed into the mantra class, such as: *svasti*, 'fortune'; *svadha*, 'oblation'; *svaha*, 'offering'; *vashat*, 'bravo'; *sam yoh*, 'all hail' or 'blessings'. The mantra *phat*, 'crack', is used by Buddhists as a weapon for driving off obstructing spirits . . .

Benjamin Walker *Hindu World*

Popperphoto

A Maori chief used to be fed by an attendant to prevent cooked food, which was considered profane, threatening his sanctity; today only a few such practices survive to be followed in times of crisis, relics of an elaborate religious system

MAORI

THE MAORIS are a Polynesian people whose ancestors arrived in New Zealand from eastern Polynesia, possibly in the 9th century AD. These population movements were not planned, rather they were accidental voyages made by adventurous seamen, defeated warriors or wind-blown fishermen. It is known that by the 11th century they had explored much of the east coasts of both main islands of New Zealand, which stretch over 1000 miles from the subtropical North Cape to the temperate southern tip of the South Island.

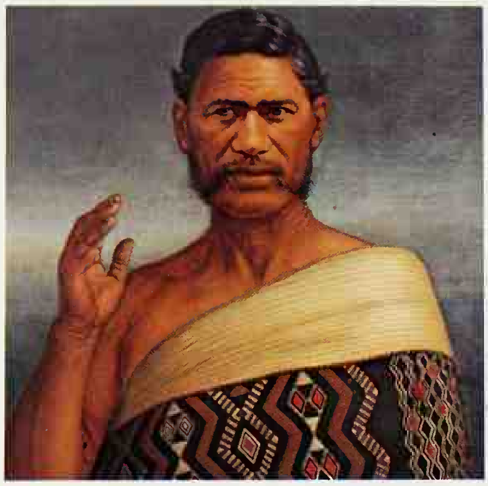
These early settlers ingeniously adapted their tropically derived culture to the colder and more varied New Zealand environment.

Left **Carved wooden panel at the entrance of a Maori assembly house; legend tells that the first carving of a three-fingered motif was brought from the home of Tangaroa, god of fishermen, on the bed of the ocean *Right* Detail from the beautiful carved lintel of a Maori house; the three-fingered motif is again present, while the protruding tongue is a sign of defiance against the incursion of evil**

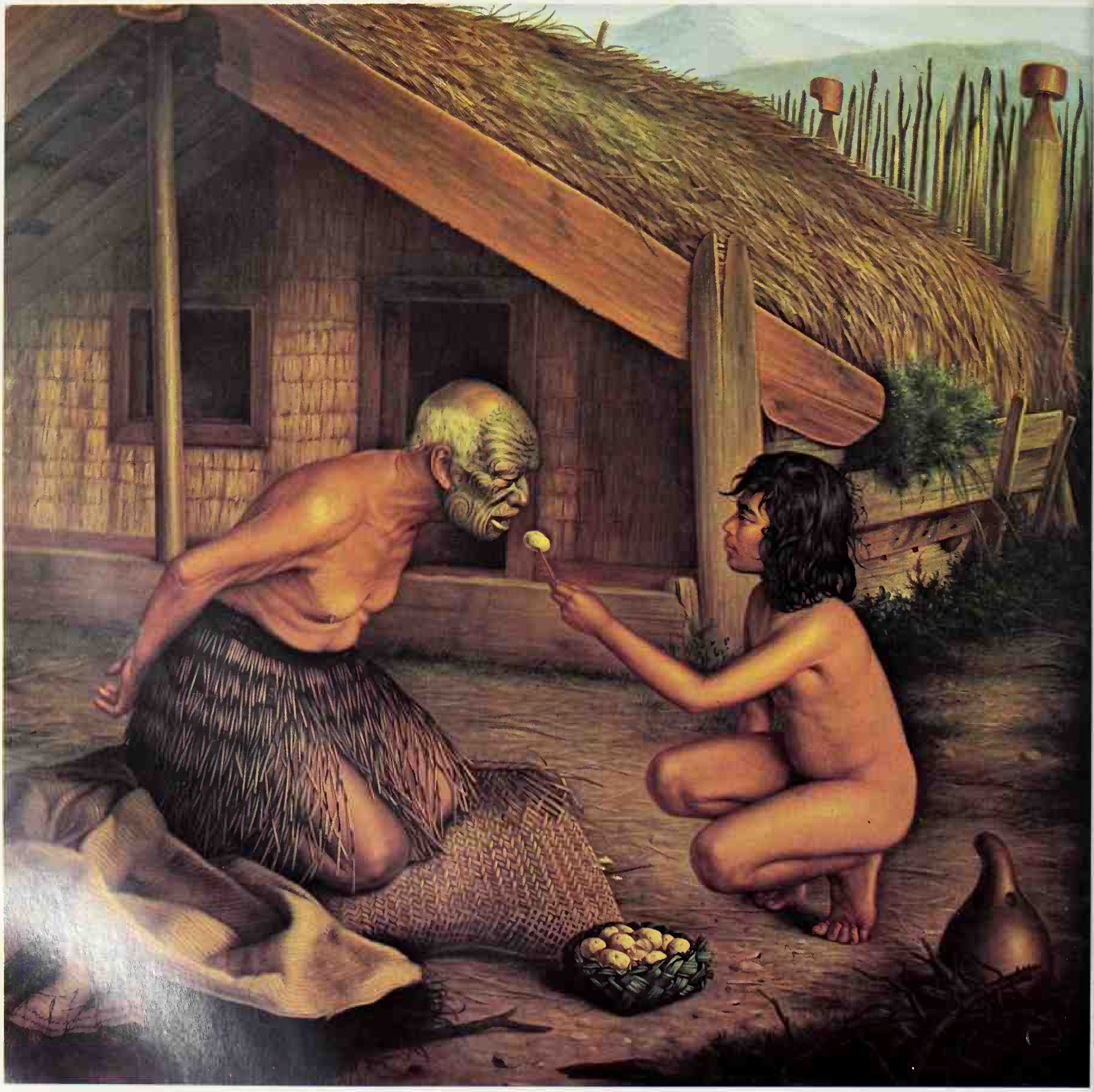
C M Dixon

Of their familiar plants, only the *kumara* (sweet potato) grew really successfully. The settlers brought with them the dog and the rat. They made their clothing from flax and their more durable tools from suitable local rocks, especially basalt, argillite, nephrite and obsidian. They were expert fishermen and cleverly exploited certain local plants for food, notably fern root, which became a staple ingredient of their diet. By the time Captain Cook first visited New Zealand in 1769, the tribes had evolved a sophisticated seasonal economy within the limited productive areas.

Traditional Maori religion can be seen as the means whereby the people perceived and came to terms with the varied environment of sea coast, forest, swamp, tussock flat and mountain that they encountered in New Zealand. They believed in a pantheon of numerous gods, which some scholars have divided into four groups. It is still sometimes claimed that at the head was a Supreme Being, Io, but the evidence is not very convincing. On the other hand, there



Auckland City Art Gallery



Auckland City Art Gallery

Left **The Hauhau, a resistance group against the European occupation of Maori land, believed that through faith and war they could regain their heritage: Te Ua, the first Hauhau prophet, with raised open hand *Below* Tapu, the Maori word meaning sacred power could be transmitted by touch; it was both revered and feared for infringement could bring misfortune, even death; painting of a tapu priest being fed by an attendant to avoid contact with profane food**

were a number of less esoteric gods, the children of Rangi (sky) and Papa (earth), the original parents. These were the gods of the forest, peace and agriculture, war, the ocean, wind and storm, uncultivated food, earthquakes, and also the god of evil. Through myth they provided the ultimate sanctions for human behaviour and attitudes. There were also lesser gods known only within a limited area, and usually restricted to one tribe, such as Maru, a war god. Finally there were tribal ancestral spirits, who were believed to have great influence over the affairs of their living descendants. The ordinary Maori commoner usually felt closest to the members of the last two groups.

Gods were approached by means of ritual offerings and incantations (*karakia*, which is also a generic word for magic). Here, for example, is a translation of part of a karakia used at the kumara harvest:

> This is the spade that descends,
> This is the spade that reverberates,
> This is the spade that resounds,
> Penu, Penu, the spade Penu.

This extract is typical in its reiteration of a particular phrase and in its reference to a phenomenon, in this case the spade, Penu, sacred in tribal tradition.

The major gods were consulted only on more important occasions, such as before war or in the preparations for building a canoe. These rituals were mostly left to priests (*tohunga*), who underwent intensive education during their youth in a *whare wananga* (school of learning). One meaning of the word tohunga is 'skilled', and the influence of the priest was often due as much to his practical as his esoteric knowledge. A tohunga of Tangaroa (god of fishermen) for example, often possessed much information about fishing techniques. As well as obtaining the favour of the god through ritual, he could advise the commoner on the best methods and places for catching different varieties of fish.

Because of his influence over supernatural forces, the priest was considered sacred or *tapu* (taboo). His sanctity was proportionate to his knowledge and to the relative importance of his particular god. When, as was often the case, the tohunga was also of high birth, his power and prestige could become enormous. He might also be skilled in sorcery (*makutu*).

Power Derived from the Gods

The significance of Maori religion and magic lies in its social context. Kinship was the most important organizing force in prehistoric Maori society. It was the basis for the family group (*whanau*), whose members, ranging through three or four generations, formed a residential unit. A number of whanau, with common ancestry, comprised a *hapu*, which controlled a definite stretch of tribal territory, with its own fishing and forest rights, and owning such valuable objects as canoes. Finally, each individual was a member of one out of about 50 tribes, all of whose members acknowledged descent from a common ancestor, sometimes a mythical hero with supernatural powers. In this way, kinship bound the individual to a series of groups interconnected both socially and symbolically.

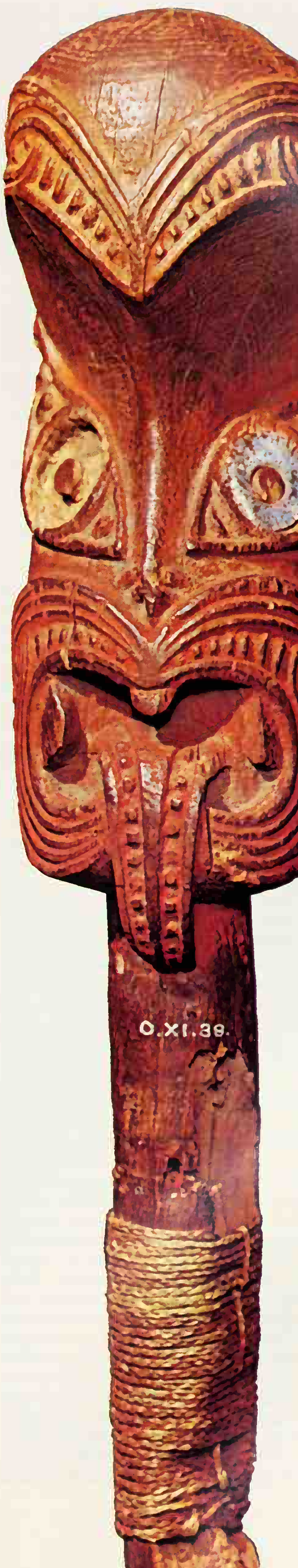
Hapu chiefs (*rangatira*) were descended in a direct line from the founding ancestors and were thus tapu. They were believed to possess special inherited powers which endowed them with a strong influence over supernatural forces through ritual.

The concept of tapu was thus extremely important. The word can be translated as 'holy' or 'sacred', since the power of tapu was derived from the gods. All free men had such power, to varying degrees, the amount depending on status. Women, unless of high status, were only tapu during menstruation or childbirth. Tapu was regarded with reverence but also with fear, since infringement would result in misfortune, even death, from outraged spirits. It could be transmitted by contact and so, for example, everything a chief touched shared his sacred qualities. It was dangerous, even disastrous, for anyone else to have contact with these things, unless he was equally tapu. A high-born Maori was surrounded by restrictions, lest he should endanger both his own holiness and that of others. The activities of the chief were particularly circumscribed. Contact with cooked food, which was regarded as profane, would make the food vessels unfit for general use. Any such contact would also threaten the chief's sanctity, since cooked food was often used in tapu-removal ceremonies. The chief was therefore fed by an attendant.

An interesting case is recorded of a high-born and powerful priest who could not travel by the public paths, in case he rendered the route unfit for others to use. There are also accounts by reliable European observers of death following accidental infringement. For instance, it has been reported that on one occasion a Maori ate some food which, unknown to him, was the remainder of a chief's meal. As soon as the man learnt what he had done, he was seized by violent convulsions and cramps, and died before sundown. This episode illustrates an interesting difference between Maori and Christian attitudes towards the wrongdoer. The Christian believes in the existence of hell. The Maori, although believing in an afterlife, had no such concept. Supernatural punishment was direct and often immediate.

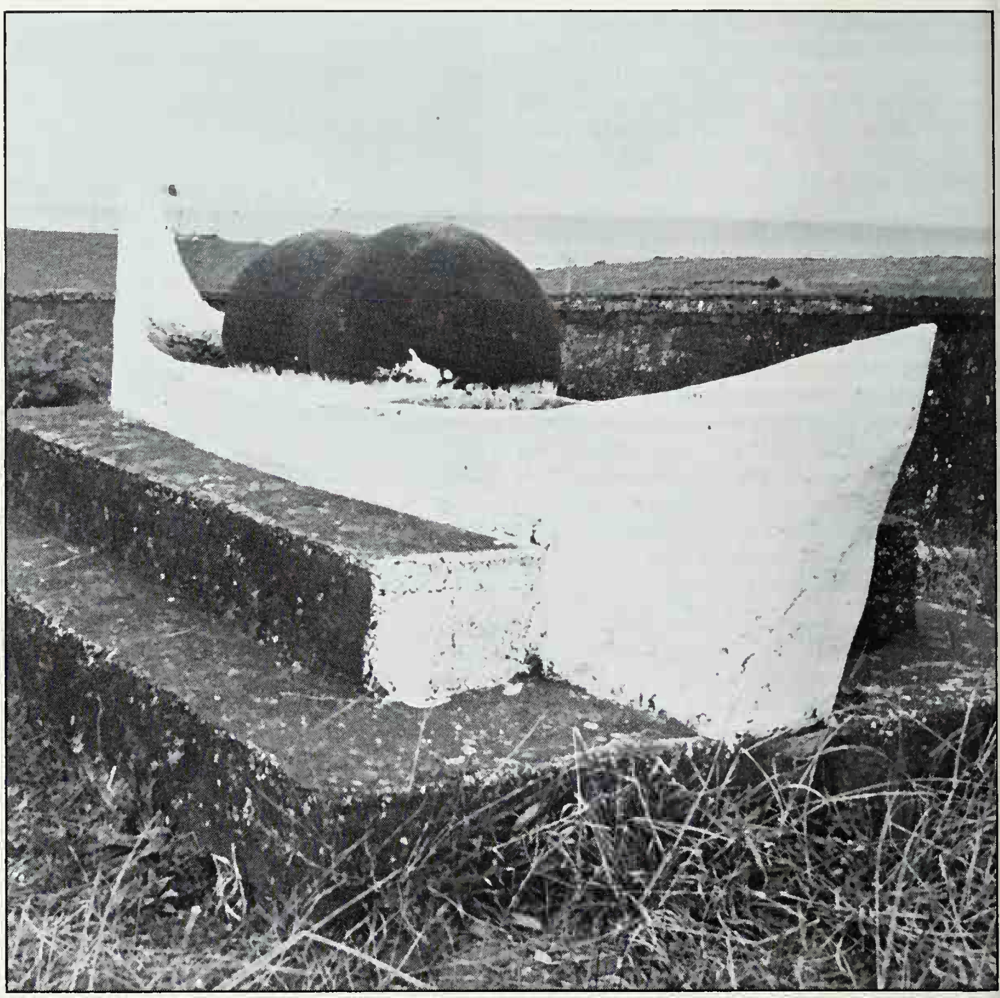
Tapu customs imposed many difficulties on the Maori commoner. Not only did he live in physical danger of accidentally breaking certain forms of tapu, but he could also suffer quite considerable material loss. For example, the visit of a high-born chief to a settlement would be dreaded and his movements within it anxiously watched, in case his shadow happened to fall on a food storehouse. If this occurred, the house and its contents would have to be destroyed.

The practice of cannibalism is best understood in terms of the Maori belief that



Carved godstick of Maru, a Maori war god: godsticks were used to request the help of a god; the image attached to a string was thrust into the ground while the priest, intoning a prayer, tugged at the string to attract the god's attention to the needs of the worshipper

University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge



Maori chieftain's grave at Awakino: tradition says that the anchor stone belonged to the canoe which brought a Maori tribe to New Zealand from Polynesia

spiritual powers could be transmitted by physical contact. In war, many of the defeated – men, women and children – would be killed and eaten. Normally death and the attendant funeral ceremonies (*tangi*) involved much tapu observance. But this attitude did not apply outside one's kindred. Thus, imbued with tapu, the successful warrior acquired further status by overcoming enemies of equal or higher status. Their tapu was reduced to nothing by the act of cooking their bodies as food. Usually, a corpse 'contaminated' its surroundings by its great tapu. By dismembering and eating the war dead the victors enhanced their own victory.

'The Land is our Father'

The tapu concept operated not only within society, but also directly in its environment. Most objects could be sacred. For example, the forests were protected. Birds were 'the children of Tane', the god of forests, and the fowler invariably observed numerous magical practices. Before hunting, he carried out a ritual at a special sacred post, and throughout the day he was careful not to use certain words connected with fowling, lest the birds be warned of his intentions. Neither feathers nor dead birds were left lying around, nor was cooked food taken into the forest, for these could pollute its resources. Similarly, trees were felled carefully and ceremoniously, for to cut or even chip a living tree without due ritual precaution was to invite misfortune. Similarly, when fishing, both men and their equipment were sacred, unable to be touched or even approached by unauthorized people, especially women and slaves.

The more elaborate items of equipment, such as canoes, storehouses and fishing nets, were treated with special care and reverence. Nothing, however, was more valuable to the Maoris than land. This was not only the main source of livelihood and prestige, but was also a tangible link between past, present and future generations, held in trust by the living with the consent of their ancestors for their mutual descendants. A chief who attended the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, at the time of British annexation in 1840, expressed this view well: 'We are not willing to give up our land; it is from the earth we obtain all things; the land is our father; the land is our nobility; we will not give it up.'

The tapu rituals which accompanied cultivation, notably of the sweet potato, reflected this deep-seated attitude. From planting time to harvest, the kumara was surrounded by ceremony. Neither women nor cooked food were allowed on the plantations, and those working there were careful to observe stringent precautions to maintain the integrity of their sanctity. It is also interesting to notice that the Maoris invoked tapu restrictions to prevent over-exploitation of their food resources. If a patch of forest, a stretch of river or a fishing area showed signs of depredation, a chief would indicate that it was temporarily declared tapu by leaving some of his possessions, usually old clothes, in a prominent position nearby.

Tapu must not be regarded as an irrational superstition. It was a comprehensive expression of religious belief with a highly practical significance for prehistoric Maori society. It gave sanction to the leadership of the chiefs. It did much to ensure the proper use of food resources. In these respects, therefore, it contributed to the maintenance of law within the tribe. More broadly, it helped to 'place' the Maori securely within a physical and mental environment which had many interrelated points of contact with his numerous gods.

Conversion and Destruction

Christianity destroyed these traditional Maori beliefs, though this did not occur quickly. The first Christian sermon was preached by Samuel Marsden on Christmas Day 1814, in the Bay of Islands, North Auckland; an area more influenced by European contact at that time than any other part of the country. But progress was slow. As the historian Keith Sinclair says in his *History of New Zealand* (1969): 'It was nine years before the first Maori was baptized – a girl about to marry a European; eleven before the next and death-bed conversion. No substantial progress was made until the eighteen-thirties.'

After that, Maori attitudes changed relatively quickly. The traditional social order was destroyed, and with it the complex and all-embracing nature of Maori religion. After the British annexation of 1840, conversion was very rapid. The new world of the European trader, settler and administrator called for different attitudes. The previous changes in Maori society, following initial European contact, had been contained within its traditional framework. With the subsequent rapid growth of European settlement and its insatiable demand for land, the Maoris became defensive. While many adopted Christian standards of behaviour, local deviations began to occur. As early as the 1830s, a millennial cult, *Papahurihia*, emerged in the Bay of Islands, which rejected Christianity as such, but contained elements of the Old and New Testament.

Rather similar reactions to Christianity also occurred later in the 19th century, during and after the Maori Wars (1856–70), when the profound Maori-European antagonism over land took a particularly bitter form. In 1862 a resistance movement began to develop which was also a new religion, compounded of Christian, Jewish and Maori elements. Called the *Hauhau* after their rallying cry, they regarded themselves as chosen people, who through faith, and pitiless war on the settlers, would regain their traditional heritage. The main fighting died down by 1870 although guerilla warfare lasted until 1872, with much savagery on both sides. During this time Te Kooti, a notable rebel leader, founded the Ringatu Christian Church, which contained certain Hauhau features.

The Ringatu Church is not the only

specifically Maori Church existing today. In 1918 a faith healer called Ratana established a Church bearing his name, which particularly appealed to the rural and urban poor. It is interesting to note that he was opposed to any belief in tapu. Both Churches have provided considerable moral encouragement to a people who took many years to recover from the effects of the Maori Wars in the context of a rapidly urbanizing society.

It is not surprising that so much Maori traditional ideology is now consigned to history. As J.E. Ritchie said in *The Making of a Maori* (1963): 'Only sickness and death, violence, and serious accident, waken responses from that past world of supernatural completeness, and then only for a few.' These 'responses' are most evident among the older people in rural areas where, for example, certain tapu practices in relation to eating and washing persist. But tapu observances still remain strict at funeral ceremonies, and probably the great majority of Maoris, even among town dwellers, still wish to be buried at their ancestral homes.

Like many other non-Western peoples, the Maori has had to live in two worlds at once. The strains induced by this conflict have resulted in cases of psychological disorder which have been interpreted, somewhat ambivalently, in terms of sorcery, or as 'Maori sickness'. Sometimes treatment by a modern tohunga can prove to be more effective than that offered by an orthodox medical practitioner. Therefore, although the traditional Maori religion has been destroyed as a comprehensive system of belief, its vestiges continue to affect the present character of Maori psychology, and contribute to the make-up of the specifically Maori urbanized culture now evolving with its European counterpart in New Zealand. (See also MANA; POLYNESIA; TABOO.)

Aesthetic Resurgence

It is important to remember that the Maori did not passively accept or suffer the effects of European colonization of their homelands. Even before the first white men arrived in their ships, Maori society had already a tradition of flexibility and adaptability. In recent years, Maoris have displayed that adaptability by organizing themselves politically and by trying to revive many of their customary ways. Today Maoris fight in the courts for the return of land taken from their ancestors, and for the return of the tattooed skulls of their ancestors, otherwise auctioned in the Western art market as though they were not sacred items, an integral part of the Maoris' legacy, but mere commodities of commercial and aesthetic interest.

Today Maoris lend their intricately decorated objects to museums both in New Zealand and abroad, where they are displayed at one and the same time as 'art' for Westerners to appreciate, and as religious items from a still functioning, still proud culture. The Maoris allow their tradition to be exploited as art by famous Western museums, and their corporate sponsors, because they know it will win their culture international prestige and thus contribute to the continuing resurgence of their way of life within New Zealand. When in 1984 the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York wished to stage an exhibition of some of the greatest objects produced by the Maori, tribal authorities had first to give their permission to the New Zealand curators of the objects for their temporary export. These leading elders also took part in the opening ceremonies of the exhibition and made clear, in their own indigenous manner, that the objects were theirs and that they were sacred.

The Maoris, and their culture, have been exploited too much and for too long. They are now determined that this will not happen again.

PETER GATHERCOLE*

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The fortunes of Babylon were for many hundreds of years entwined with those of Marduk, the High God. At the Creation, Marduk brought order out of anarchy and in return he was rewarded with supreme power

MARDUK

MARDUK BECAME the high god and patron saint of the city of Babylon, and eventually secured for himself an international prestige which went far beyond the natural confines of the Babylonian Empire.

The name first appears in about 2000 BC, at which time it was of little importance, but it seems possible that originally Marduk was a solar god, for later he was remembered under a Sumerian title, meaning 'the bullcalf of the sun', and indeed throughout his career Marduk was one of the gods of light.

His ascent to fame, however, was first achieved under the Amorite Dynasty of Babylon, which reached its peak in the reign of King Hammurabi, c 1792-1750 BC. On the famous diorite monument discovered at Susa, and inscribed with the text of the Babylonian 'code' of laws, Marduk is twice mentioned in the introduction. He had been allotted 'the divine worship of the multitude of the people', and thus before the end of Hammurabi's reign had become the Babylonian national god and patron, though perhaps not yet supreme. As administrator of justice Marduk was represented on the contemporary cylinder seals with the toothed saw that cuts decisions.

From that time onwards until the Seleucid era, beginning in 312 BC, the fortunes of Babylon were inextricably bound with those of Marduk, who, however, attained his greatest authority during the renaissance of the Babylonian Empire between the end of the 7th and 6th centuries BC. It is indeed apparent that when Marduk was down, Babylon's fortunes were at their lowest ebb and three historic events illustrate the point.

First, an inscription of the Kassite king, Agum II, recalls that he brought back to Babylon the statues of Marduk and his wife, Sarpanitum, after they had been in exile in Khana for 30 years. This banishment had followed the sack of Babylon by the Hittite king, Murshilish I, in 1595 BC. Only with the triumphant restoration of these divinities did Babylon begin to rise again, but it took many centuries for Marduk to recover his prestige.

The renaissance appears to have occurred shortly before 1100 BC when the god's statue was once again recovered, this time from Elam, to the east of Babylon. The reign of Nebuchadrezzar I, who was responsible for the victory over Elam, thus marked a turning point in Mesopotamian religion. This was indeed a signal triumph, for Elam which had been a deadly menace to Babylonia, was thereafter quiescent for nearly three centuries and, doubtless, the credit went to Marduk.

A third historic event which marks once again a low ebb in the god's fortunes was the devastation of Babylon in the time of Sargon, King of Assyria, and the neglect of the god's sanctuary by Sargon's son, Sennacherib, in the years 705-703 BC. The New Year ceremonies were at that period several times suspended. But Babylon, which had suffered so much devastation under the early Sargonids, was restored to favour again by the superstitious Assyrian King Esarhaddon. Even after the conquest of Babylon in the 6th century BC by the Persian monarch Cyrus, the fortunes of Marduk waxed strong, though heresies in the form of worship were alleged to have been perpetrated by his predecessor, Nabonidus. Thus, Marduk's fortunes may be followed from historical records and are also attested by his fluctuating popularity as a component of personal names.

Victory over Chaos

Information about the character of the god comes to us from religious and magical texts. First comes the famous epic of Creation, a long poem recited in the god's honour on the fourth night of the New Year's festival. It was known in antiquity as the *Enuma elish* from the first line which runs, 'when on high the heavens were not named'. There were seven tablets in all which varied in length between about 115 and 140 lines. They tell us about the creation of the universe, and proclaim the Babylonian belief that in the beginning the first gods were generated out of the mingling of waters which had preceded the formation of the earliest Mesopotamian slime.

As the gods multiplied there was a schism in the course of which the respectable High Gods such as Anu, Ansar and Ea became divided against the detestable aboriginal dragon Tiamat representing chaos and supported by her evil myrmidons. The good gods, threatened with destruction, were saved from annihilation by the birth of Marduk, son of the magical god Ea, and destined to restore order to the universe. In agreeing to fight Tiamat, Marduk struck a bargain with his superiors and was promised the power to declare fates and work miracles. The magical 'appearing and disappearing' act of Marduk's garment is a notable forerunner of the conjurors Maskelyne and Devant. The saviour's destruction of Tiamat with the aid of the Seven Winds is a theme frequently illustrated on Babylonian seals, but we cannot recognize in iconography his creation of man out of the blood of Kingu.

Marduk's victory was celebrated by his reorganization of the heavens, by a drunken thank-offering banquet of the gods and by the decision to build Babylon, the shrines of Esagila and the ziggurrat, the great temple tower.

Ritual Humiliation

It is fortunate that a few tablets written in Babylon and elsewhere have survived to give us a fragmentary account of some of the ritual acts performed during the eleven days devoted to the New Year Festival.

The proceedings may be thought of as a Passion Play in which a ritual marriage between the king and the goddess (see ISHTAR) probably took place as well as many other symbolic performances; for example, the king had to give an account of himself before the god through a negative confession, or recitation of uncommitted sins. Most striking was the ceremony in which the king, standing before Marduk, was stripped of his regalia and had his face slapped by the high priest: it boded ill if the king did not shed tears.

Banquet of the Gods

At the end of the festival, Marduk led the great procession of gods which passed along the sacred way, flanked by enamelled brick reliefs of lions, and his personal symbol, the Musrussu dragon, to emerge at the *Akitu* temple where he entertained the divine assembly to a banquet.

The belief that in the course of this festival Marduk was entombed and resurrected is based on a misinterpretation of an Assyrian text and has no foundation. It has been shown that in two late texts the resurrected god was Nergal, king of the underworld, and that this emergence probably represented the victory of the sun after the winter solstice.

The cult of Marduk flourished in Assyria from the 14th century BC onwards, but in the 7th century he was displaced by the national god Assur: a late Assyrian text describing the capture of Marduk and his committal to the ordeal by water is a political tract designed to discredit the god. However, Marduk's popularity was due to his reputation as assistant magician to his father Ea in the rituals for alleviating sickness and misfortune, and as an exorcist. In a literary work named the *Ludlul Bel Nimeqi* Marduk appeared as the saviour of the righteous sufferer, who was a kind of Babylonian Job.

The power of the priesthood of Babylon over a dynasty of successful soldiers and notables, not of royal blood, ensured the glorification of Babylon and the rich endowment of the temples. However, the god's fame throughout the ancient world and for posterity derives from the imperial victories of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadrezzar II who rebuilt the city on a magnificent scale.

(See CREATION MYTHS; MESOPOTAMIA.)

M. E. L. MALLOWAN

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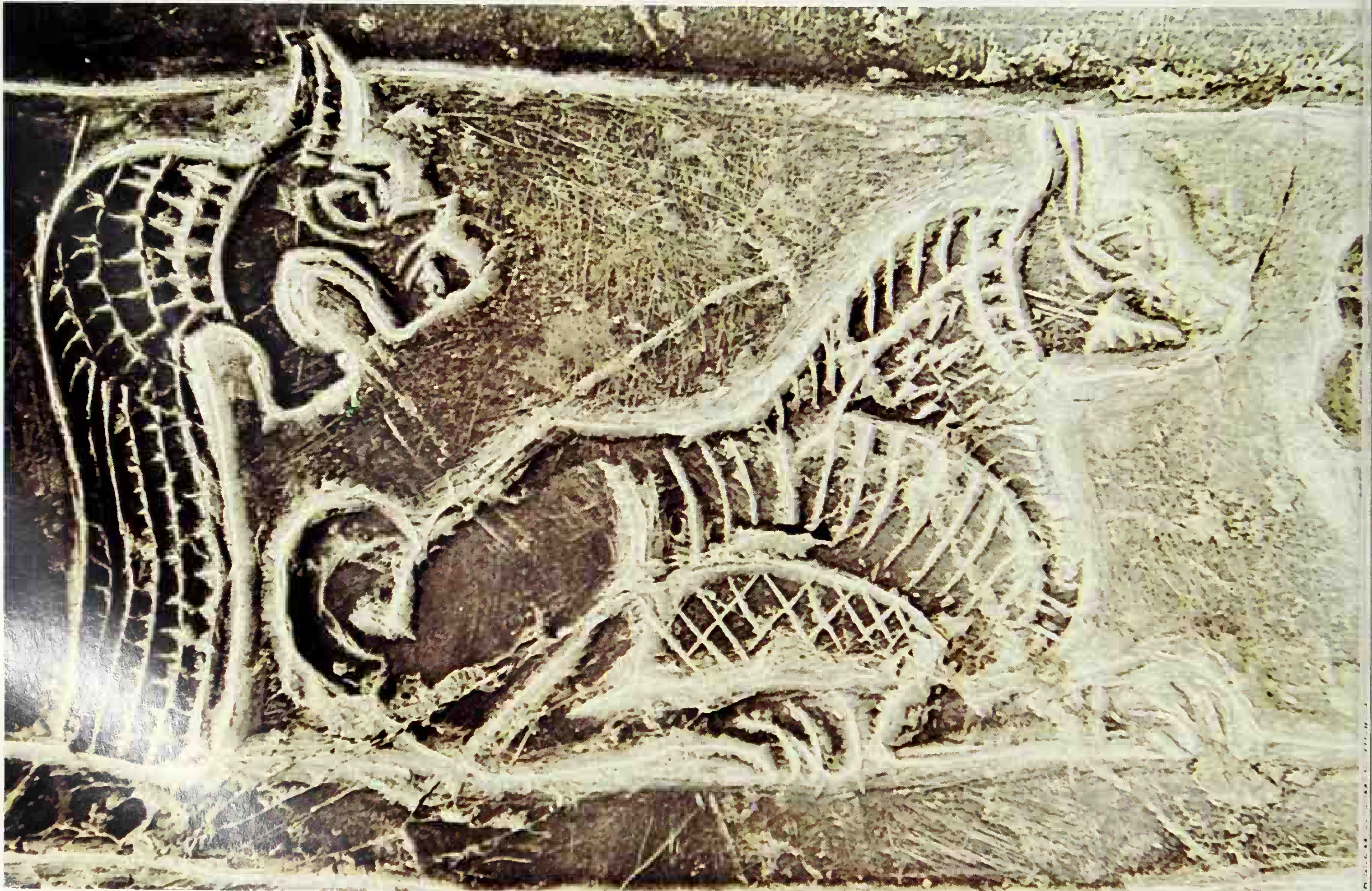
The Musrussu dragon, the personal symbol of Marduk, the high god of Babylon. Brick reliefs of the dragon flanked the sacred way along which Marduk and the gods passed after the New Year Festival: from a boundary stone.



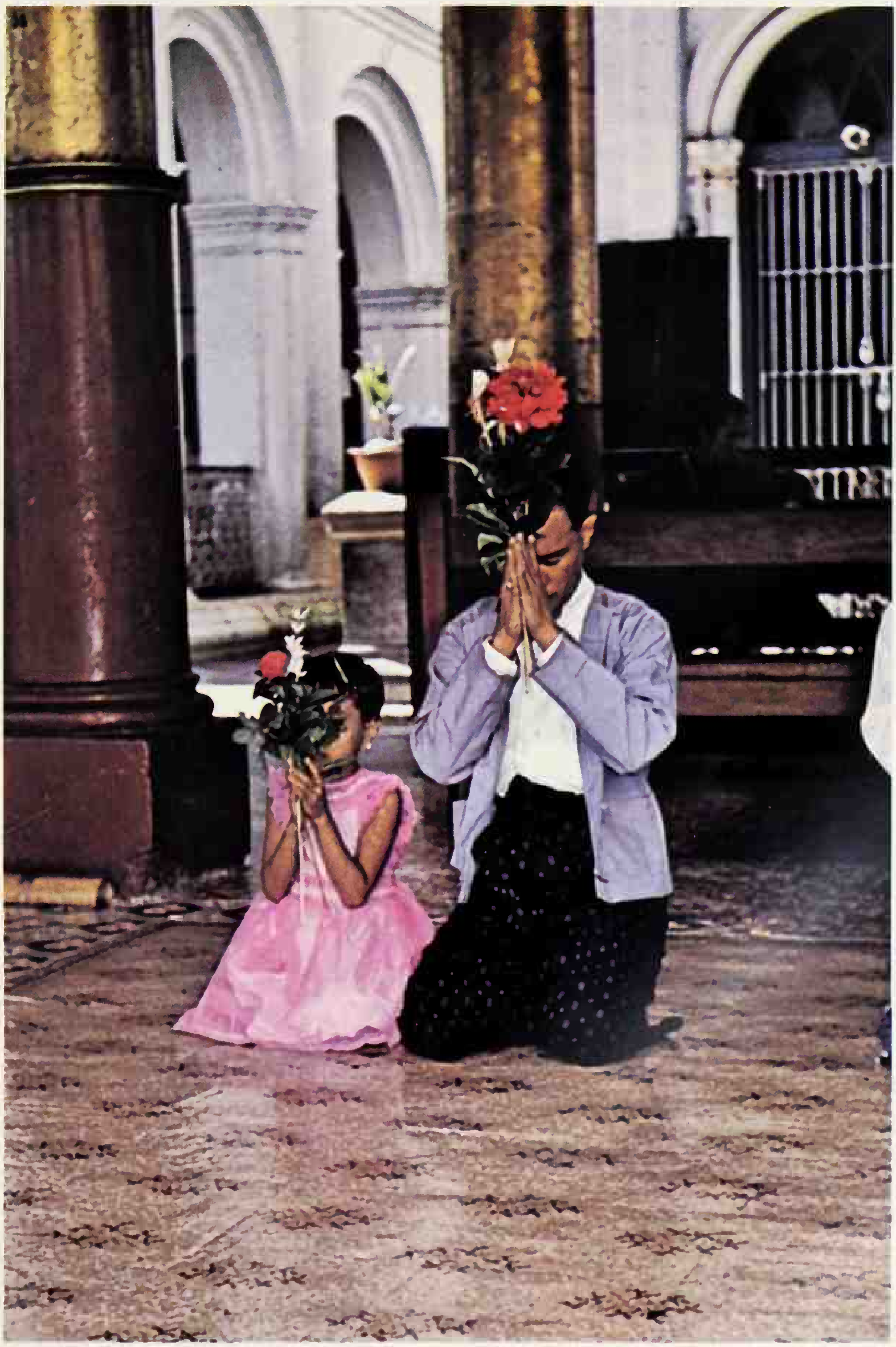
MARRIAGE & BETROTHAL

In England 150 years ago, a dissatisfied husband was popularly considered free to sell his wife, while in a certain Dutch village even today a courting couple will marry only if the girl becomes pregnant; along with the fertility magic and superstitions found in European marriage customs is a strong strain of earthy prudence

WHEN MARRIAGES were arranged for practical reasons, rather than for love, child brides were quite usual. St Elizabeth of Hungary, betrothed at the age of four to an 11-year-old bridegroom in 1211, was carried to his home in a silver cradle, and Mary Villiers, a ward of Charles I, was already widowed by the time she was nine years old; soon after her husband's death she was seen climbing trees in her black dress, pretending to be a bird.

Since the purpose of such marriages was to ensure the union of prominent families, children were sometimes betrothed soon after birth. Although betrothal, the binding promise of marriage, has little significance for us today, it was at one time an occasion for considerable ceremony. In Greek Macedonia, for example, it was conducted with prayers and exchange of rings, in the presence of a matchmaker, the priest, family and friends. The bride offered her married relatives the traditional formal refreshments – jam, coffee, alcohol – and presented the groom's parents and the matchmaker with socks she had knitted herself. They thanked her with the customary greeting: 'Mayest thou enjoy the kerchief in good health.' During Cheese Week, which immediately preceded Lent, the young man sent his betrothed sweet cakes, and on the eve of Easter she received gifts of a coloured candle and Easter eggs.

The nomadic Vlachs, a people scattered through the Balkans, arranged for a group of friends and relations, acting on behalf of the groom, to call at the home of the bride. There they found a low table covered with fine cloth and laid with three soup plates.

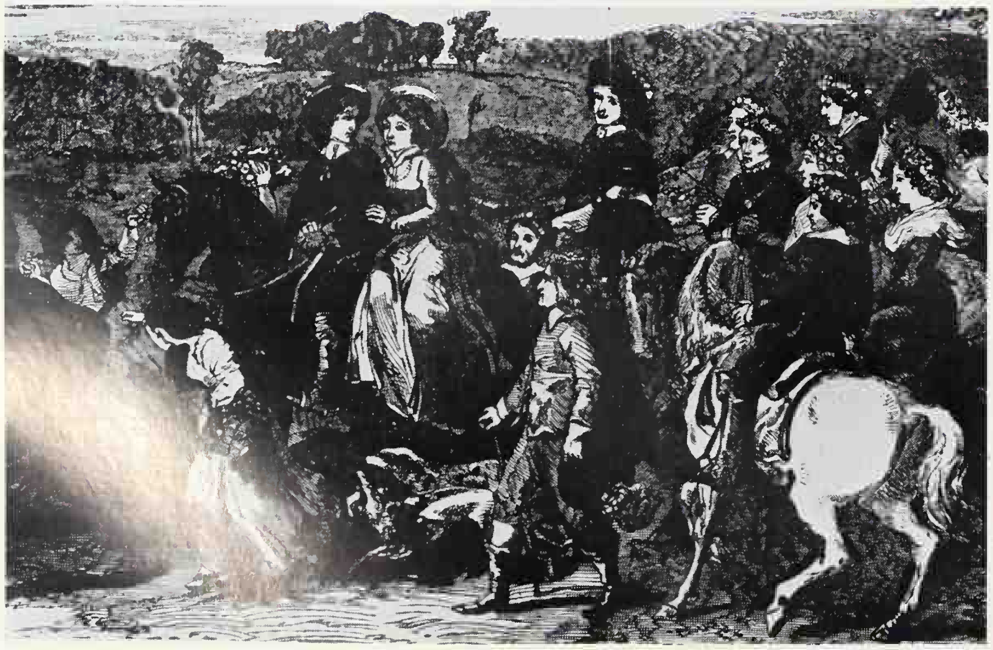


Jorgen Bisch

The Western concept of romantic love is not universal, and child marriage is still practised in cultures where marriages are arranged for economic and social reasons *Right* After the wedding of this Burmese child bride, the girl will be expected to go and live in her husband's house although she is too young for the marriage to be consummated

Axel Poignant

F. H. C. Birch/Sonia Halliday



Mansell Collection

Marriage means the transfer of one of the couple from one kin-group to another, and many marriage and betrothal customs are connected with this. In New Guinea (*top*) women of the bride's group stage a mock fight to prevent her from leaving. Elsewhere, the bride may be led to her wedding in brand new clothes and in ceremonial procession, as at this village in Cyprus (*centre*) *Below* At Dunmow, in Essex, a side of bacon is awarded to a married couple who can swear that they have not regretted their marriage for a year and a day

Two of these contained sweets. The third, which was empty, had to be filled with gold, sometimes made into a necklace. It is still a common Balkan custom for a woman to wear her betrothal gift in this fashion. When the groom's party returned, they threw flour over him, wishing him a long life with the words: 'May you grow white like this flour.' Meanwhile, the same custom was performed for the bride, by her family.

In 17th century Holland the betrothed couple were required to sit together on a bed and kiss each other in the presence of both families; the ceremony was ratified by exchange of rings. These were very big, sometimes engraved with suitable pictures, and sometimes, like the English gemmel ring, formed of two parallel circles. The halves, separated between the partners at the betrothal, were joined together as a wedding ring for the marriage ceremony. To pledge fidelity, the couple would cut themselves and drink each other's blood; or they might use the blood to make a written declaration. In England, halving a coin was a popular custom. A character in a play called *The Country Wake* (1696) says: 'I ask't her the question last Lammas, and at Allhallow's-tide we broke a piece of money.' The straw true-lover's knot was another token of fidelity, in use within living memory. A young man prepared two, one for himself and one for his sweetheart. If she pinned hers over her heart, this meant she had chosen him, and the couple wore the knots until their wedding day. The girl might also be presented with a sprig of the plant Lad's Love; if she threw it away, her lover had been rejected, but to smell it was a sign of acceptance.

A young man from the fens would present a fur tippet to his sweetheart. This was a narrow fur stole, prepared by the lover from animal skins, which he had obtained and cured himself. The couple stitched the hide to a silk lining, stuffed it with sheep's wool, and inside each end placed a sachet containing a little pubic hair: the man's on the right, the woman's on the left. When worn, the criss-crossed ends covered the woman's heart, and the little packets inside ensured a happy married life.

In many countries marriage is a social obligation, and anyone remaining single is frowned upon. The ancient Jews had no word in their vocabulary for bachelor, and

In the Calvinist village of Staphorst in Holland, trial marriage is still practised and custom decrees that a couple marry only when there is evidence of a pregnancy

ne Poles used to ridicule anyone unmarried eyond the proper age. Nonetheless, it was ot always so easy to obtain a wife, and a oung man might have to earn her by vorking for his prospective parents-in-law: So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and ney seemed unto him but a few days because f the love he had for her' (Genesis 29.20).

This ancient custom persists today. mong the Eskimos of St Lawrence Island, laska, the boy works one year for his sweeteart's family, carrying water, gathering riftwood, chopping ice, assisting with unting, and generally proving his willingess to work for them and his ability to rovide for a family. But if the girl is already regnant, the couple are usually married s quickly as possible.

undling and Handfasting

nticipation of the intimacies of marriage vas not so frowned upon in the past as one night suppose, since betrothal was often onsidered to be nearly as binding as narriage. The early 17th century Puritan ettlers of New England practised bundling, custom known variously in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, as well as Holland, Norway and probably elsewhere. The parents of a New England girl who vas courting permitted the couple to spend he night together in her bedroom. The pair vho were expected to behave with reasonable ropriety, wore all their clothes and were ccasionally separated by additional layers f bedding. This custom, which seems to ave begun dying out in America during the 8th century, was still common within ving memory in England in Cambridgehire, where it was introduced by Irish abourers.

In 17th century Holland bundling was nown as *queesten*. Suitors on Texel Island raditionally arrived through the window nd, since this necessitated smashing the ane, few houses had all their windows nbroken. Although couples met in the irl's bed, it was again intended that ropriety should be observed. The girl ay on the sheet, the boy between sheet and over. Nearby an iron vessel and a pair f fire tongs were ready for her to sound he alarm if the young man became too bold. Parents usually approved of the custom ince it was thought an honour for their laughter to receive these visits. The call might last all night, and if a pregnancy resulted the baby was taken along to its parents' wedding, concealed beneath the mother's cloak, though clearly visible for everyone to see. Today, in the Calvinist village of Staphorst, trial marriage is still practised and custom decrees that a couple marry only when there is evidence of a pregnancy.

The Scottish custom of 'handfasting' also provided a testing period. Young men and women chose a companion at a fair held annually in Dumfriesshire, and lived together as man and wife until the following year. If the experiment was a success, they married; if not, they were free to take another partner. A priest nicknamed Book-in-the-Bosom, perhaps because he carried a marriage register, arrived periodically to solemnize these weddings.

There is usually no difficulty about arranging marriage for an attractive girl or man, but it may be a problem in cases of deformity or physical defect. In Poland such a man was betrothed to a relative and the banns read out in church, not with any real intention of marriage, but simply to make it known that he was eligible.

Calling the banns is an important preliminary to marriage and the English language is full of dialect expressions for this custom. In Lincolnshire it was known as 'spurring'. If the banns had been read once, people said: 'Why thoo's gotten one spur on thee!', and two banns were 'A pair of spurs'. Sometimes a peal of bells, the spur peal, was rung on the day that the first bann had been called. 'Breaking a rib' was another usual phrase. 'He's gotten one rib broke', meant that the banns had been called once; 'fallen plump out of the pulpit last Sunday', was a Wiltshire expression. Generally speaking it was unlucky to hear one's own banns called: it meant that children of the marriage would be deaf and dumb. Similarly in Poland, should a girl hear her first banns, her pots will break after she is married.

Gifts are always an important part of any wedding, because of the exceptional expense involved, not only in setting up the newly married couple, but in the occasion itself. If a Manx couple were badly off, it was usual to place a sieve in the kitchen so that guests could drop in a coin to help with the cost of entertainment. This custom, known as a Penny Wedding, exists elsewhere in various forms. Bride-ale was for the same purpose; the bride sold home-brewed ale to the wedding guests, who paid her lavishly.

In Scotland and the North of England a 'Bride-wain' was arranged. This meant that carts and horses were taken round the houses of friends and relatives, who gave sacks of corn, meal, wool, and anything else they could spare. Sometimes there was a ceremonial procession from the bride's old home to the new one. A waggon, loaded with household articles and furniture, set out and, as it passed by, friends threw gifts upon the load. In Lancashire, among the very poor, everyone gathered together on the day of the wedding and built the young couple a house of clay and wood, which was known as the 'clay bigging'.

If a husband was wealthy, but nonetheless did not wish to inherit any earlier debts from his wife, there was a traditional remedy. Until about 100 years ago in England, it was commonly believed that if a bride arrived at her wedding dressed in nothing but a shift, her husband would be freed from any such obligation. Again, if the bride walked stark naked from her house to her future husband's, the same purpose would be served. During the last century a woman tried to do this at Kirton-in-Lindsey in Lincolnshire. She had intended starting out down a ladder from her bedroom window, but her courage failed her; she partially dressed while still standing at the top.

The idea of approaching one's wedding in a state of nakedness is echoed in the custom of removing old clothes and putting on a completely new set. A Vlach bridegroom would stand in a flat metal dish and strip, preparatory to donning his pristine wedding clothes. English brides too were freshly dressed from head to foot, though the requirements of the old rhyme: 'Something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue' were carefully observed. Today the luckiest colours for a bridal dress are white, pink and blue. Green is thought to be especially unlucky and in parts of Scotland even green table decorations and vegetables were omitted from the bridal meal.

Food is an important feature of any wedding celebration, and certain items are essentially symbolic. Formerly in the Netherlands the bridal couple were offered salted cream sprinkled with sugar, a confection representative of the bitter and the sweet sides of

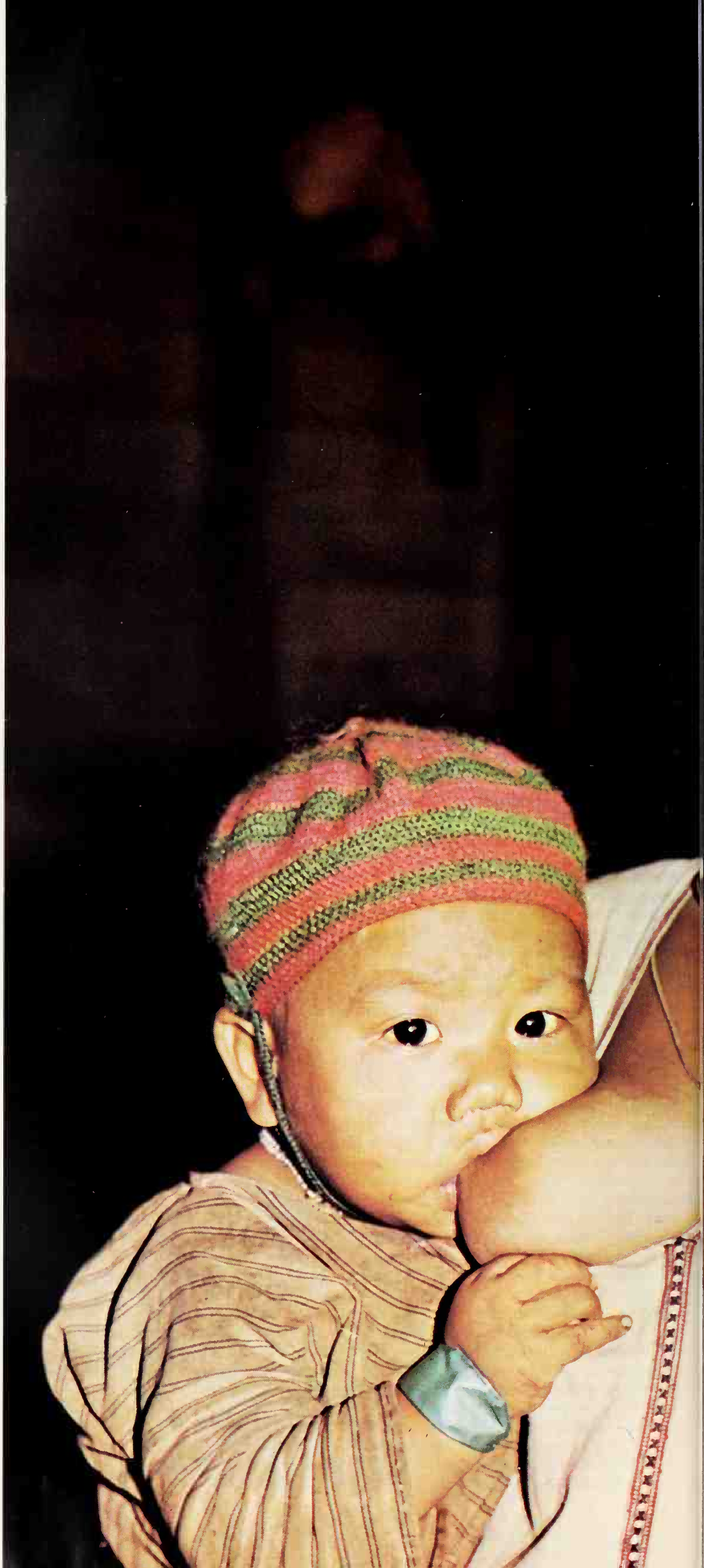
Camera Press, London

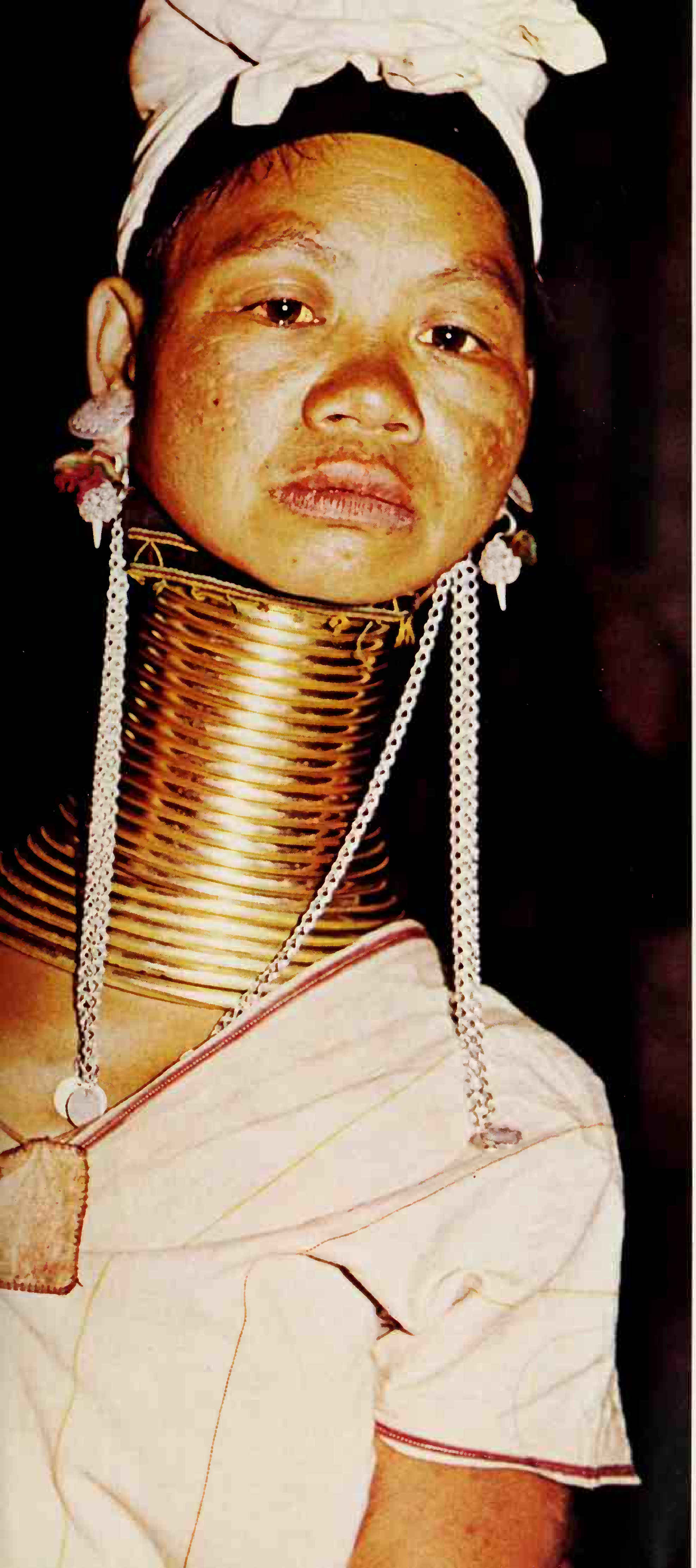
married life. English wedding-cake with its icing sugar and bitter almonds is said to possess the same significance. The rich mixture traditionally used in its preparation stands for fertility and abundance. Every guest must eat some and unmarried girls are supposed to sleep with a slice beneath their pillow in order to dream of their husbands-to-be. Yorkshire folk called this 'dreaming bread'. A sliver of cake used formerly to be passed nine times through a wedding ring to achieve the same result. This form of wedding divination has always been popular. Indeed as early as 1279 the Church in Poland was obliged to issue a decree forbidding its practice.

Baking and Breaking

Polish bridal couples wear pieces of cake tucked inside their blouses throughout the marriage ceremony; they must also share the first and last pieces together. Hence the ceremony of baking the bridal cake is very important. Women known to be happily married are invited to prepare the mixture, and the bride's mother receives them with vodka, sausage, ham, pickles and cake. Only women may be present, apart from the official matchmaker, and the cake is made without salt to signify that the young couple should live together without sorrow. If the cake rises well, it is a good omen. In Macedonia three maidens sift the flour, and three married women prepare the dough. They may put a hook and eye into the mixture, representing the male and female elements. Sometimes the bride wears two great ring-shaped cakes on her arms as she makes her way to the bridegroom's house. She breaks one when she is halfway there, and the other is broken on arrival. Women eagerly seize the pieces, which they believe will assist them in childbirth.

In parts of England it was usual to break a piece of cake over the head of the bride when she returned from church; in Ireland they used an oatmeal cake, in Scotland shortbread. This was generally done by the groom. Sometimes it was thrown over the head





University Films

In many societies to this day, a woman may be severely punished for infidelity, desertion or breaking up a marriage ***Far left*** **This Yemeni woman claimed that an iron ring had been driven through her forearm as a punishment for deserting her husband** ***Left*** **Spiral brass collars worn by adult women of the Padaung people in Northern Burma, are removed, perhaps causing serious injury, if a married woman complains of her husband**

of the bride, plate and all, and if the plate broke into many pieces, it was a good omen foretelling many children; if it failed to smash, someone quickly stepped on it to avert the unlucky sign.

When people were very poor, as in Ireland during the last century, the food for a wedding simply consisted of what was available; in this case, bruised potatoes, flour, oatbread and butter. More often it was representative of fertility and abundance. For this reason, on entering her new home, a Greek bride crushed a pomegranate – a popular symbol of fruitfulness in the East – and marked the doorpost with a butter cross. The couple ascended the stairs beneath a shower of sweets, coins, barley, chick-peas and rice. These ideas are present in our own wedding ceremonies. Confetti has largely replaced rice, which was thrown to ensure the fruitfulness of the marriage.

The symbolism of the cereals in wedding ceremonies arises from the fact that they are basic foods in the countries where they are used. At a Polish wedding feast a flat, plaited wheaten loaf called *kolacze*, which has been blessed in church, represents all bread. Good solid food is served: a traditional mixture of lentils and barley called *kasha*, peas, gravy, a bird, and *borscht*, soup made from beetroot or cabbage. Everyone cries 'The soup is bitter' until bride and groom have kissed each other. Since the wedding feast is said to represent the couple's future married life, there is always plenty of food. For the same reason, the fiddlers are fed by the bridesmaids so that they will not stop playing.

In Lowland Scotland it was the custom to serve a fowl. Afterwards, so that she and her husband would be happy together, the bride was given the small side-bone called 'hug me close'. In Sunderland, as elsewhere, the bridal pair were presented with hot pots after leaving the church; these were mugs of ale which were brought by local women as a compliment to the newly weds. A stranger to the district, taken by surprise at his wedding more than a hundred years ago, remarked: 'The composition in these mugs was mostly, I am sorry to say, simply horrible.'

On reaching the churchyard gate the bride might be required to jump, or be lifted over, what was known as the petting stone; on Holy Island the petting stone is all that

remains of a lost Saxon cross. Sometimes a decorated rope might be stretched across the road, and the groom had to pay a fine to obtain free passage.

Today when the ceremony and reception are over, bride and groom set off on a journey together. But this is a modern custom. Three centuries ago, in parts of Western Europe, the whole wedding party danced along with the couple to the bridal chamber, where the bride's mother was waiting to say goodbye. An English marriage, before the honeymoon came in vogue, concluded with the ceremony of 'throwing the stocking'. Bride and groom were expected to sit up in bed, fully dressed, while the bridesmaids took it in turn to stand at the foot of the bedstead and throw the bridegroom's stocking over their shoulder. The aim was to hit him on the face. The groom's men then aimed at the bride using her stocking. This was a form of divination: whoever succeeded would soon be married.

A post-marital custom recorded in 1792 in Ayrshire, was known as creeling. Two days after the wedding the married couple gathered together with their friends and filled a small basket, or creel, with stones. The young men were obliged to carry this by turns until released by a kiss from one of the girls. When the groom's turn came he was expected to carry the basket for a much longer period, until his bride had pity and kissed him, as a sign of her satisfaction with the marriage. Two days however is scarcely a fair trial period, and the real question was whether the marriage would stand the test of a longer time. At Dunmow in Essex the ancient custom survives of presenting annually a flitch of bacon to a married couple who can swear, kneeling on two sharp stones, that they have not regretted their marriage for a year and a day.

Infidelity, like marital harmony, used to be considered a community affair and the punishment inflicted on the offender was by no means good natured. A practice called 'rough music', known by a variety of names according to the district, consisted of a procession, generally at night, with the local men banging any suitable metal object they could lay their hands on, such as saucepans and kettles, and blowing improvised musical instruments. Verses were recited and life-size effigies of the offenders were publicly paraded. Rough music could be played for a variety of reasons, the most usual being some offence against the marital code, particularly adultery or incest. The punishment was effective; as a rule the persecuted couple had to leave the district.

Cost of a Secondhand Wife

In the event of a marriage being unsuccessful, it was once a common belief that if a man disliked his wife he could get rid of her by the simple expedient of selling her. With a halter placed round her neck, the wife would be publicly exhibited for sale for a sum not less than a shilling; the man who bought her would then become her husband. It was considered that he had done so, simply by virtue of the purchase. There are many recorded cases during the last couple of centuries. Some of these cases strike us today as bizarre. For example on 7 April 1832 at Carlisle, a farmer named Joseph Thomson put his wife up for sale after three years of marriage, complete with a straw halter. After waiting for almost an hour, he succeeded in getting 20 shillings and a Newfoundland dog for her. According to popular custom, this rough-and-ready form of folk divorce was legally binding.

It was commonly believed that the success of a marriage would depend upon the time at which it was celebrated. We know that the ancient Romans avoided May weddings because the month was a time of purification. The *Lemuria,* or Feast of the Unhappy Dead, was celebrated on the 9th, 11th and 13th of that month, and the poet Ovid says those who married in May would soon die.

There is a curious association of death and marriage in Jewish custom, perhaps explained by the tragedies of their history. The couple must be reminded of sorrow in the midst of joy and hence a glass is broken. The pieces used sometimes to be carefully saved and used to weigh down their eyelids in death. Numerous examples from different cultures of the ceremonial smashing of

A bridegroom or his kin may give presents to the bride's family to compensate them for the loss of her services. Conversely, a bride may be given a dowry which she brings to her husband *Above* Brideprice of feathers and money in New Guinea *Right* Inspecting the dowry at a polyandrous Indian wedding

Axel Poignant

Food is an important feature of weddings, for various reasons, including symbolic connections with fertility and the idea of cementing an alliance by sharing a meal *Left* In New Guinea bride and groom share a pig *Right* Cutting the cake at a wedding reception in Northern Ireland: the rich mixture traditionally used in preparing the cake stands for fertility

objects at weddings are cited by E. Westermarck in his *History of Human Marriage*. Among the southern Serbs, for instance, it was the custom, after the bride and groom had returned, to throw a wine glass at their door, symbolizing the approaching loss of virginity. The guests, with a great deal of noise, were meanwhile busy smashing glasses, crockery and an egg in a sack. It seems likely, as Westermarck suggests, that the shattering of fragile objects was intended to ensure the consummation of the marriage, which might otherwise have been prevented by malevolent influences.

The Ashkenazim, the Yiddish-speaking Jews of Central and Eastern Europe, used to carry a hen and a rooster in procession with the bride and groom as symbols of fertility. For the same purpose was the custom among Spanish and Portuguese Jews of causing the bride to perform the Fish Dance. Russian and Polish Jews fed the couple on fish, and the woman might also jump over a bowl containing live ones.

Certain Jewish wedding customs, particularly among the Ashkenazim, were not dissimilar from those known elsewhere. Bride and groom were escorted separately to the synagogue in a gay procession, and on arrival were showered with wheat or barley. To make the significance of this ritual quite clear, the celebrants called out three times to the bridal pair: 'Be fruitful and multiply', while a wedding canopy, the *chuppah*, set out of doors, signified God's promise to Abraham: 'Thus shall thy children be, like the stars of heaven.'

VENETIA NEWALL

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Chanting hymns and beating the ground, the Salian priests prayed to Mars to promote fertility; the god's concern for the welfare of the community and of all animals and crops is as old as his better-known role as god of war. But it is in this virile, aggressive aspect that [illegible] in astrology

MARS

AMONG THE ANCIENT ITALIANS there was no greater god than Mars, after Jupiter. He was known by an unusual variety of cult names: Mars, Mavors, Maurs, Mamers, Marmar, Marmor, Mamurius, and the honorific compound Marspiter. Many Latin and neighbouring communities named a month after him, and our month of March preserves the memory of his veneration. The Roman month *Martius* embraced the spring equinox and by its season reinforced the god's oldest functions in agriculture. March marked the first month of the oldest known liturgical year at Rome. Certain state priests promoted the growth of crops at the onset of the year, prepared for the new year by cleansings and otherwise marked what we today keep as the New Year. For a time 15 March opened the official year but later yielded to 1 January, which acquired from 1 March such customs as decoration with evergreens. However, March retained many ceremonies of the new year as well as the constant cult of Mars which was mainly entrusted to the Salians, priests whose title seems to be derived from *salire* 'to dance, leap'.

On fixed days in March the Salians proceeded along an established route where they would stop at certain points and perform rites that included the chanting of some of the oldest hymns in the Latin language, beating time on the ground according to the ritual three-step, and carrying outmoded spears in which Mars lurked, and shields, one of which was sent from heaven. Their dancing and beating of spear on shield was probably thought to advance the growth of the crops. However, the priests' military accoutrements and the regular resumption f warfare in March always underlined the god's martial aspects. The surviving scraps f the Salian Hymns mention many Roman ods, and Mars himself in the form *Mamurius Veturius*, evidently the Mars of he old year. The hymns certify the Salians' oncern for agricultural growth and the welfare of the infantry (armed with spears f a kind different from those which the riests themselves carried). Much of the Salians' intervention with their god was irected toward cleansing the community nd its utensils.

Peculiar to Mars in Roman religion is he use of the horse. On 14 March a racing estival, *Equirria*, was kept for Mars on the Campus Martius, 'Field of Mars'. On the ame ground every 15 October another race was run, after which a horse of the winning hariot team was sacrificed to Mars. The lood of its tail was dripped onto the hearth n the king's former residence, the Regia. The ashes were later compounded with the remated remains of unborn calves sacriced on 15 April and applied in the cleansing eld on 21 April, Rome's birthday. The orse's blood may have been intended to ward off barrenness, while the cremated alves were sacrificed to invite fertility into he community.

A third race came in late February and resumably marked the end of the old year. The last month of the liturgical year was rammed with cleansing rites. The *Quirialia* in February honoured Quirinus, an pithet sometimes applied to Mars. Both Mars and Quirinus had Salian priesthoods s well as their own *flamen*, a Roman priest eculiarly bound by religious restrictions see JUPITER). Quirinus as a distinct god was an offshoot of Mars who acquired onsiderable prestige of his own. As a romoter of peace, Quirinus represents he willingness of Mars to cease warring and o accept terms from the enemy.

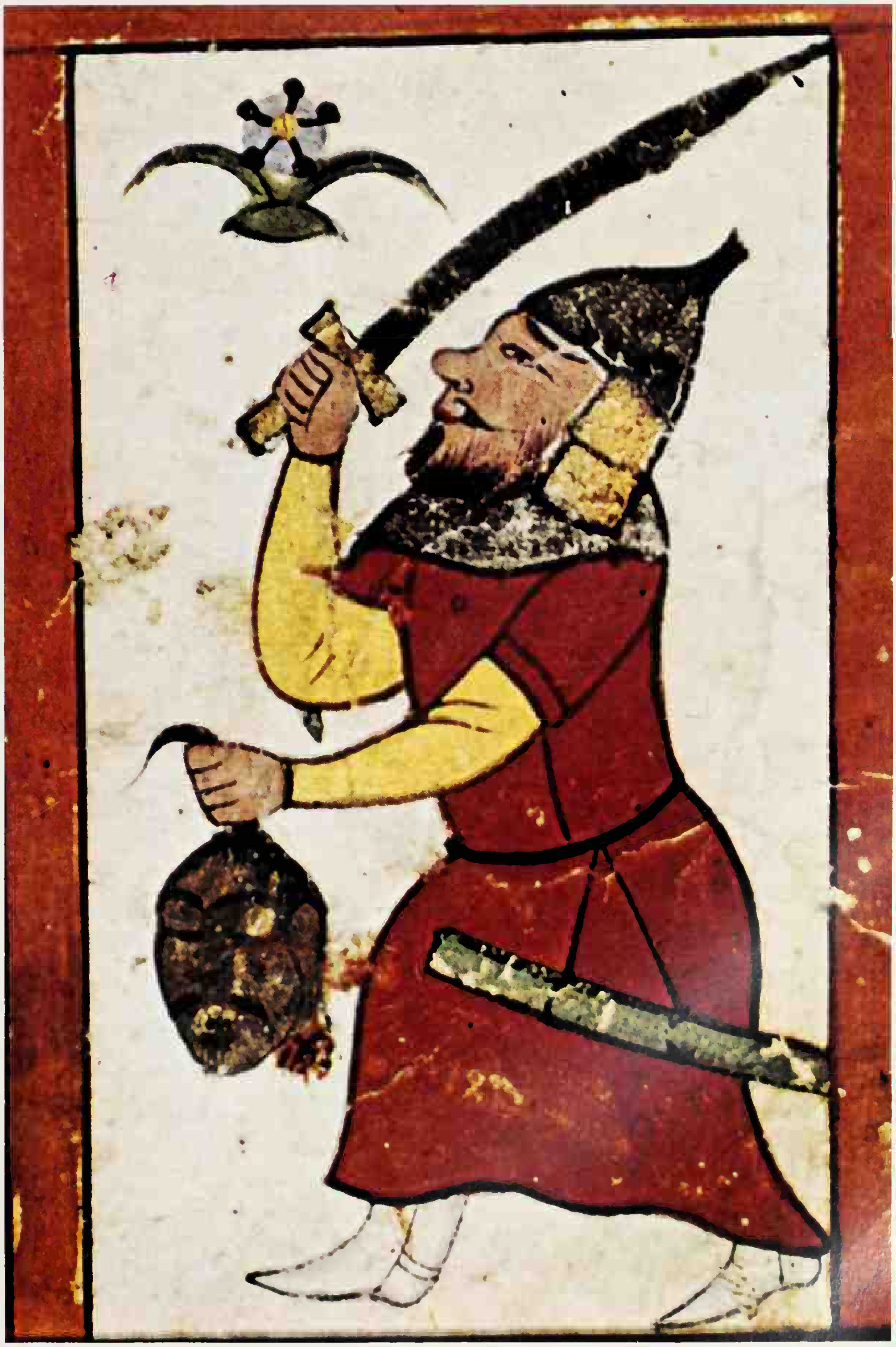
eaping the Boundary

At the end of May another priesthood, the Arval Brothers, annually kept their agriculural cult by invoking the name of Mars thrice in three different forms, by thrice epeating the petitions and by dancing the itual three-step (*tripudium*). No older rayer than the Arval Hymn fully survives o us. After asking help of the Lares (see ARES) and before and after inviting the eed gods, the Brothers begged Mars to revent the invasion of blight and the ollapse of growing grain, to leap the oundary and to remain on the land. This rayer was sung five miles from Rome, pparently at the border. The god's arrival y avoiding contact with the boundary self demonstrates an irrational fear which till survives: brides are carried over the hreshold lest their stumbling bring barreness. Mars was expected to remain on the nd, but not to import barrenness. His rotection of Roman ploughland (*arvum*) paralleled by old evidence from one Umbrian town where, like the Campus Martius, two fields belonged to the Martial woodpecker, where Martial Growth (*Cerfus Martius*) was hailed for cleansing the community and for damning foreigners, and where this Martial Growth controlled two divine powers, Protection and Fright.

The Umbrian ceremonies are attested earlier than an elaborate ritual for cleansing Roman farmland by circling it with a suckling pig, lamb and calf (*suovetaurilia*), with prayers and sacrifices to Father Mars who would defend and increase the land, its human and animal occupants, and all the vegetation. In another Roman ritual of the same era, Mars Silvanus, Mars of the Woodland, received sacrifice within the woods for the good health of the cattle. From its oldest survivals the cult of Mars shows a primary concern for the health and welfare of all living animals and crops.

The Avenger

Just as old but less clear at the outset is the Mars who was the god of war. The Salian priests certainly observed in part a cult of war. After it became a formal republican assembly of all citizens, the Roman infantry always met on the Campus Martius and never within the city's sacred boundary (*pomerium*). The Field of Mars held the oldest known altar to Roman Mars. At the only archaic temple to Mars, which stood over one mile from the city on the Appian Way, the cavalry formed for its annual parade into the town, and the infantry



etail from an Arabian manuscript shows a red-obed Mars displaying the head of his victim; n astrology Mars is the 'rogue male' of the lanets, both violent and brave

Bibliothèque Nationale

rallied at the outset of a campaign. Consequently it is often asserted that Mars was purposely kept from the city because he was bellicose. Indeed he was worshipped outside where the Romans expected him to promote growth. However, the Salians worshipped him only in the city and there, too, kept their shields and spears, which they addressed 'Mars, awake!' The early lack of urban temples does not prove that Mars was solely a war god in origin.

Some of the Martial temples may be of relatively late construction on sites where he did the greatest good, on the land. The Emperor Augustus greatly enhanced the god's material condition at the end of the last century before Christ. In 53 BC, the political and financial magnate Licinius Crassus had gone to Parthia (modern Iran) to seek military glory. Instead, Crassus was slain, his army routed and massacred, and his standards captured. Julius Caesar and Mark Antony vainly hoped to recover the first standards lost to an enemy within memory, but the former succumbed to death and the latter to Cleopatra. It was left to Augustus to recover the standards by diplomacy. Not only did he represent his success as a military victory by depicting a kneeling Parthia and a triumphal arch on his coins, but he also lodged the standards in one of the two urban temples he built for Mars Ultor, 'the Avenger'. Thus Augustus made Mars responsible for a real military victory over Caesar's murderers at Philippi, as well as for a revenge upon the invincible Parthians. The Avenger's temple in Augustus's forum attained such importance that the grand plaza gradually exchanged the Emperor's name for the god's. Until some 40 years ago the street of Christian Rome which ran above the Forum Augustum was still called Via Marforio.

The early equation of Italic Mars with the Greek Ares lent great emphasis to the literary role of Mars as war god. Ares appears in Greek poetry mainly as a divine personification of war and violence. Some argue that *Ares* means 'destroyer', which if true would explain his relative lack of cult. Ares enjoyed prestigious family connections in mythology, where he is represented as a most unpleasant god. In terms of divinity Ares cannot compare with Mars, but most of the mythology of Mars was borrowed from Greek poets. Two peculiarly Roman tales show the difference.

One explains why the month of Mars comes at the year's beginning. The god sought Minerva in marriage. The withered hag of a matchmaker, Anna Perenna, pretended to have gained Minerva's consent, but herself wed Mars. The festival of Anna Perenna (which means little more than the [illegible]ing year') fell on 15 March when a [illegible] and promiscuous mob kept her holiday. The marriage of Mars marks the cycle of the year at the return of spring.

In another Roman legend Mars figures in the foundation of Rome, whose story abounds in Martial religion. Mars fathered the founder of the city on an unwitting virgin. The Romans believed this paternity foreordained Rome's unsurpassed glory in arms. However, many elements of the foundation legend remain obscure to us (see FOUNDING OF ROME).

British Museum/Michael Holford

Mars was concerned with both agriculture and war, and the Roman infantry always met on the 'Field of Mars'. He was equated with the brutal Greek war god, Ares, from whom most of his mythology was borrowed, including the story of his liaison with the love goddess *Above* Mars on a Roman coin of the 2nd century AD *Right* Paolo Veronese's painting of *Mars and Venus United by Love*

Veiled Emigrants

Mars and Jupiter are the best known of the few oracular deities of the Italians. Through his special bird, the woodpecker (*picus Martius*), Mars could indicate future events. To be born in the month of Mars clearly distinguished a child and thus promoted the names Marcus and Mamercus. The Marsi of central Italy and the Mamertini of southern Italy are two peoples named after the god. The origin of the latter illustrates the double function of Mars. In prehistoric times a community troubled by want of food or by the scourge of a human enemy would vow all that was produced in a given spring to Mars and Jupiter. Jupiter received the animals born in that season. Upon reaching adulthood men born at that time were sent veiled (perhaps so that they could see no ill omen) from the boundaries of the dedicating community to found a new community. Such consecrated men were dedicated to Mars. Thus, we are told, the Mamertini earned their name.

An animal often led the consecrated emigrants. The Italic Hirpini were named after the wolf in these circumstances. The Picentes may have taken their name from the woodpecker. Although without any linguistic merit, the most famous of such names is Italus and its derivatives from *vitulus*, 'calf'. This belief originated among Greeks who remembered one band consecrated to Mars that was led by a calf. Accordingly, when her Italian allies broke with Rome in the late '90s BC, the Marsi had coins for paying troops of the Italian confederacy marked with the Italian calf trampling the Roman wolf, the Martial beast which had given fresh life to the infant Romulus and Remus.
(See also JANUS.)

R. E. A. PALMER

Mars in Astrology

The 'Rogue Male' of the planets, Mars i considered rather dangerous, and likely t be involved in any act of violence. The colou attributed to him is red, the colour of anger appropriately enough, for the closer h comes to the earth, the more obvious is th planet's reddish colour. Although Mars i said to be baleful and can be harmful t either sex, to women he is the natura significator of men in general, and husbands in particular; he also signifies the activ callings of soldiers, policemen, athletes sportsmen and metal-workers. Even a scholar, if young or a husband, can b signified by Mars.

His character is impatient, tireless excitable, easily moved to wrath but als readily appeased. He is neither subtle no profound; if one assumes that a Martian i bluffing, one soon finds out one's mistake In manner, the Martian is generally hel to be rough and crude, lacking in refinement and uninterested in the arts. Learned men however, need to have a good deal of Mars i their composition to persist in their ofte unrewarding and even tedious studies. Religious persons are frequently strongly influenced by Mars, for the religious need courage and tenacity.

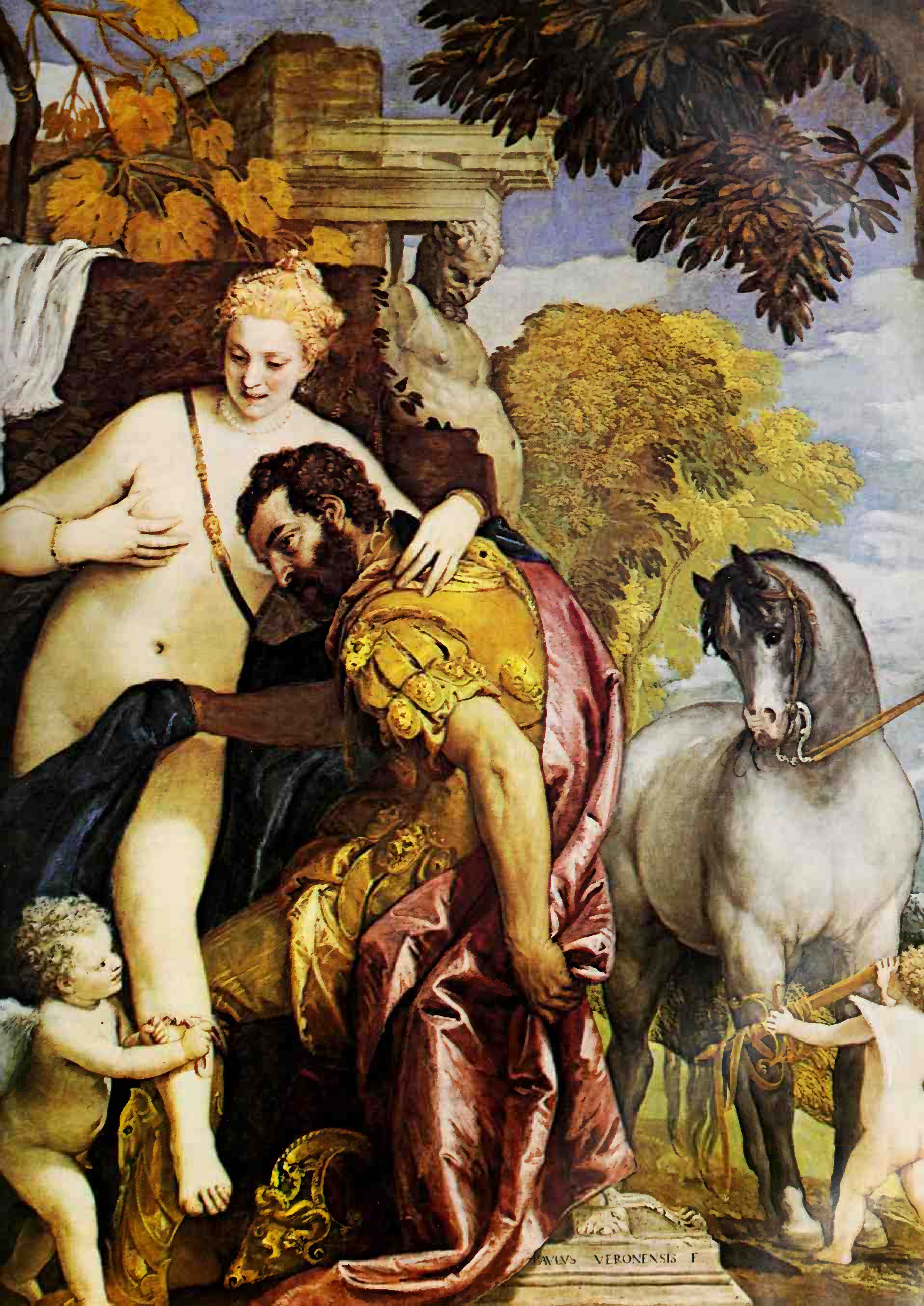
The Gift of Energy

The greatest advantage of Mars is that he is never easily fatigued. He represents energy, and in consequence is never too tired to go on, and never too lazy to bother. He always insists on doing his work thoroughly. The man who does enough but no more is not a Martian, for a Martian enjoys labou and regards it with understanding, rather than as an imposition for which one is justified in exploiting one's employer. His pugnacious temperament will enable the Martian to fight his way through life, especially in the years of adulthood.

If Mars is the only dominant planet, there is a tendency for the rough and brusque manner identified with Martians to emerge; but there are four quarters of the horoscope in which planets can dominate, so there must be many Martian people in whom the wish to use their energy is not their sole and prevailing drive.

One very common personality defect of Martians is that, although they have plenty of energy, they may be content to use it in whatever way is familiar to them, and lack the imagination and vision to launch out in a different direction. Another defect of which Martians should beware is that often they cannot accept things as they are and feel they must change them at all costs. A Martian schoolmaster would be likely to administer punishment to give vent to his own feelings, rather than because he considered it for the good of the offender. But Mars is as courageous as he is hasty; although he does not deliberately take chances, he is never afraid to run risks and seems to be utterly fearless.

FURTHER READING: For the god Mars, see R. E. A. Palmer, *The Archaic Community of the Romans* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970).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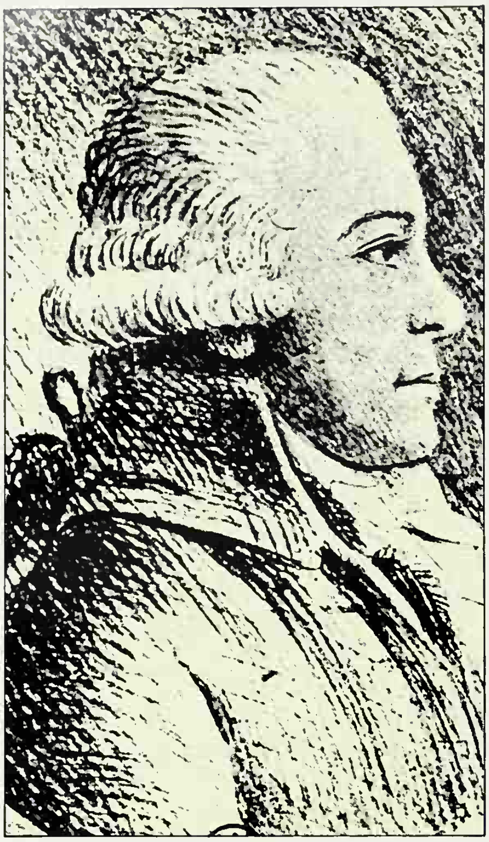
MARTINISTS



'The Unknown Philosopher' Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, secretary to Martinez de Pasqually, was responsible for classifying and interpreting his master's occult theories; he established his own personal school leading to the founding of a Russian Martinist order

MARTINEZ DE PASQUALLY, founder of the occult school known as Martinism, was born at Grenoble in 1710 and died in Santo Domingo (now Haiti) in 1774. His teachings were written down in manuscripts, most of which were never printed. He stated his general doctrine in his *Traité de la Réintégration des Etres* (Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings), several copies of which were written out by hand by his close friends, including his secretary Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803), who called himself 'the Unknown Philosopher'. Saint-Martin interpreted and clarified his master's theories in a celebrated work, *Tableau Naturel des Rapports qui unissent Dieu, l'Homme et l'Univers* (Table of Correspondences between God, Man and the Universe), but it is Martinez de Pasqually's own book which must be referred to for an understanding of genuine Martinism.

Martinez de Pasqually drew his ideas from Gnosticism, the Cabala, the Hermetica and the early Christian theologian Origen. His [illegible] teaching was that there are two essentials for human salvation (thought of in terms of the soul's ascent towards its original source in the Divine – see MACROCOSM; MAGIC). First, there must be a revelation which brings the knowledge of the soul's origins, of its descent into the lower spheres of the universe, and of the need to liberate itself. Second, in a magical ceremony the initiate must evoke and unite himself with his 'guardian angel', the 'higher self' which is a small fragment of the Divine Intelligence itself.

Before the beginning of the universe, so Martinez de Pasqually taught, God emanated or sent forth from himself certain beings, who came from the divine essence and who contained part of the divine power. They constitute four 'orders' or classes of spirits, infinitely higher and more powerful than the cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels, which were created later.

These beings strongly resemble the 'aeons' (or patterns of thought) of Gnosticism. They existed originally only in the plane of Non-being, where God had left them free to act in accordance with their own impulses but where there was no danger of their producing the evil which some of them embodied. But they rebelled, left the plane of Non-being and entered the plane of Being, bringing into objective existence the evil which was part of their nature. It was this transfer to a plane which had been forbidden to them that constituted the initial revolt of these entities. Having rebelled, they tried to make themselves equal to God by sending forth spiritual beings dependent on themselves.

Fall of the Jailer

To prevent this threatened proliferation of evil, God created the world of matter, by a kind of condensation or 'densification' of the corrupted and rebellious beings, so that the world could be the stage on which these entities might act freely, exercising their own will-power and evil impulses. But this stage was also their prison, in which they were deprived of any form of communication with God himself.

To provide a jailer, as it were, for the prison-universe which he had created, God sent forth as an emanation from himself the primal or universal man, Adam, whose task was to oppose the evil entities now confined within the material world, to fight against them and keep them in check. Although he had emanated after them, he was their superior in power and glory. The angels and other secondary spiritual creatures were made helpers in the struggle.

The leader of the evil beings plunged the primal man into a kind of rapture, in which he tempted him. Adam contained within himself all human souls and he had the power to provide each of them with a 'glorious form', a garment which it would wear when it emanated from the totality. The Creator himself, however, had to provide the divine spark which would complete each human soul when it came into being. The Tempter persuaded Adam to carry out this creation by himself, making himself, in his turn, the 'first cause'. And Adam did so, breaking the spiritual bond which linked him with God.

As a result, Adam became spiritually degraded, as the evil entities themselves had, and he disappeared. Like a pearl necklace when the string has broken and the pearls roll about in all directions, so human souls roll haphazardly from one form to another, from one life to another, until a messenger from God, called the Mender, comes to receive them and lift them up in to the hands of a new Master of the World, who will remould them into a complete unit, identical with the first one.

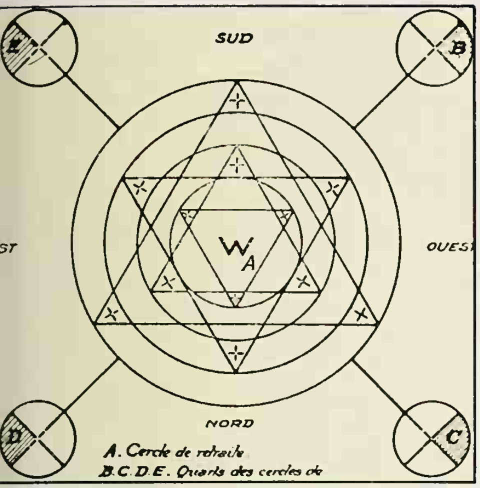
With the primal man, the whole of Nature fell and was overrun by evil. The angels and secondary spiritual powers were also affected, having lost their master, leader and protector. Martinez de Pasqually's 'universal reintegration' applies not only to the reconstitution of the universal man and the repentance of the evil spirits but to the re-establishment of the 'planetary and stellar spirits', the beings which animate the most distant galaxies. For this purpose, the Creator raised up ten Human Guides or 'Chosen Minors': Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Zerubbabel and Jesus. These beings remind men of the truths which, under Satanic influence, they tend to forget.

Magical Operations

The Christianity of the Martinists is decidedly unorthodox and their 'saviour', Jehoshua, the last of the Guides, is not necessarily the same as the Jesus of Nazareth of the Christians. After him come lesser and temporary Guides, or 'Regenerated Minors'. These are the adepts, the masters of spiritual doctrine, and this was the stage which could be reached by those who attained the highest degree, or rank, in the Martinist *Ordre des Chevalier-Maçons, Elus-Cohens de l'Univers* (Order of Knights-Masons, Chosen Priests of the Universe): the degree of *Réaux-Croix*, a term allegedly derived from Hebrew words meaning 'seeing' and 'messenger' or 'herald'. Lower than these are the 'Reconciled Minors', or initiates who have not yet attained the highest rank, and finally the 'Deprived Minors' or 'men of the Flood', the ungodly who are caught in the snare of gross desire, without spirituality.

The Order of the Elus-Cohen had three main divisions, in ascending order the Porch, the Temple and the Shrine, each consisting of three degrees. These were, in the Porch, the Apprentice Cohen, Fellow Cohen and Master Cohen; in the Temple, the Master Elus-Cohen, the Grand Architect and the Grand-Elus of Zerubbabel; and in the Shrine, the Apprentice Réau-Croix, Fellow Réau-Croix and Master Réau-Croix. (Apprentice, Fellow and Master are the three grades of Freemasonry. Cohen is the Hebrew for 'priest' and Elus means 'the elect' or 'the chosen'.)

It was only in the highest degree of the Shrine that evocation of entities belonging to the Divine Plane was carried out. The chief evocation was that of the Mender, Jehoshua, and the basic methods were those of the *Key of Solomon* (see GRIMOIRE), including the use of circles, names of angels, planetary hours and symbols. The magical operations of the lower degrees were intended to establish contact between the operator and the Invisible World. Lofty and beautiful prayers recalled the goal which the Order tried to attain. There were also exorcisms intended to strangle demonic influence in the universe and thwart its



The Martinist hope of 'universal reintegration' applied not only to man but also to the 'planetary and stellar spirits' which animate the galaxies: Martinist diagram, from the collection of M. Robert Ambelain

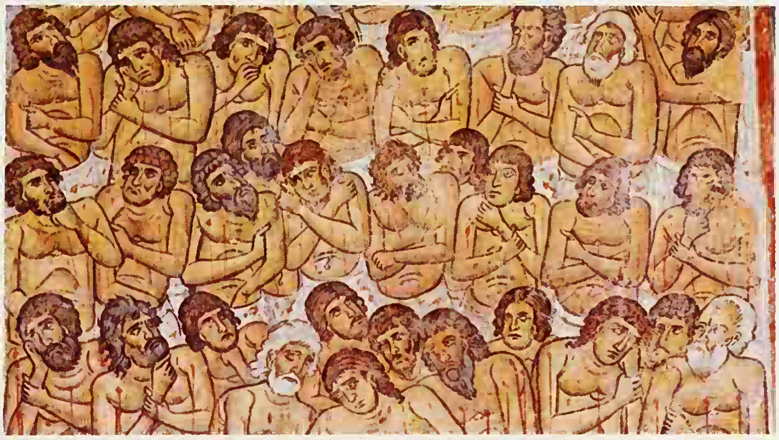
powers over men, and to combat black magic.

The principal initiation of the Order was the evocation and incorporation of an angelic entity which became permanently linked with the initiate. It acted as his 'guardian angel' and he was its 'vehicle' or 'agent'. From then on, the angel and the man strode forth along the path of 'reintegration'.

The Order's chief centres were its 'chapters' at Foix (established in 1760), Bordeaux (1761), Paris (1767), Lyons (1768) and other French cities, and those on Santo Domingo, including Port-au-Prince (1772); and 'temples' which ranked lower, founded at Amboise, Tours, Blois and Poitiers in 1767. After the death of Martinez de Pasqually the Order declined and in 1781 was allowed to lapse by the Order's then Grand Master, Sebastian de las Casas.

Jean-Baptiste Willermoz tried to perpetuate Martinist teaching in the secret degrees of the Order of the Holy City, founded at Lyons in 1778. Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin is said to have established a small personal school of his own in 1779. The Martinist Order which the French occultist Papus (see PAPUS) took over in the 1890s lacked any genuine initiatory connections with the original Order.

ROBERT AMBELAIN


Sonia Halliday

Martyrs

Those who suffer for a cause, especially early Christians who died rather than renounce their faith; the first Christian martyr was St Stephen, who died by stoning (Acts, chapter 7); from at least the 2nd century there were festivals in honour of martyrs; parents named children for them and pictures of them (St Laurence and the gridiron, St Catherine and the spiked wheel, St Sebastian riddled with arrows, and many others) became objects of popular devotion.

See SAINTS.

No special honour was accorded to the mother of Christ in early times, yet her exaltation to supernatural status increased steadily; later the cult of the Virgin Mary almost seemed to eclipse that of Christ himself

MARY

THE DEVELOPMENT of the cult of the Virgin Mary forms an interesting and significant aspect of Christianity. It reveals the interaction of theological speculation and the demands of popular faith. The latter factor s of special interest for both the comparative study and the psychology of religion. It demonstrates the importance of the female n the thought and feelings of ordinary people when expressed in religious faith and practice. Christianity in its original form, ike the Judaism from which it derived, was masculine in character. It conceived of God in terms of 'Father', and Christ as Son'; there was no divine 'Mother'. The Virgin Mary came to fill this need.

The earliest records of Christianity reveal an interesting situation concerning the status of the mother of Jesus. The Epistles of St Paul, which were written about 20 years after the Crucifixion, contain no mention of Mary. This omission is the more remarkable in view of the later accounts of the Virgin Birth of Jesus. For Paul laid great stress on virginity, and it would surely have greatly strengthened his case to have cited the Virgin Birth, if he had known of it. The evidence of the next Christian writing, the gospel of Mark, is equally curious. It is silent about the Virgin Birth, and it represents Jesus as rejecting a suggestion that his mother had a special status (Mark 3.31–5); the later gospel of Luke (11.27–28) records an even more precise rejection. These passages would seem to indicate a kind of official discouragement of a tendency to accord special honour to Mary.

However, the gospel of Matthew (1.18–25) and also that of Luke (1.26–38), contributed powerfully to the presentation of Mary as a unique personage through their accounts of the Virgin Birth of Jesus. Luke, in particular, endows Mary with supernatural honour by recording the angel Gabriel's salutation: 'Hail, favoured one, the Lord is with thee', and Elizabeth's reference to Mary as 'the mother of my Lord' (1.28,43), as well as by the words of the Magnificat (1.46–55).

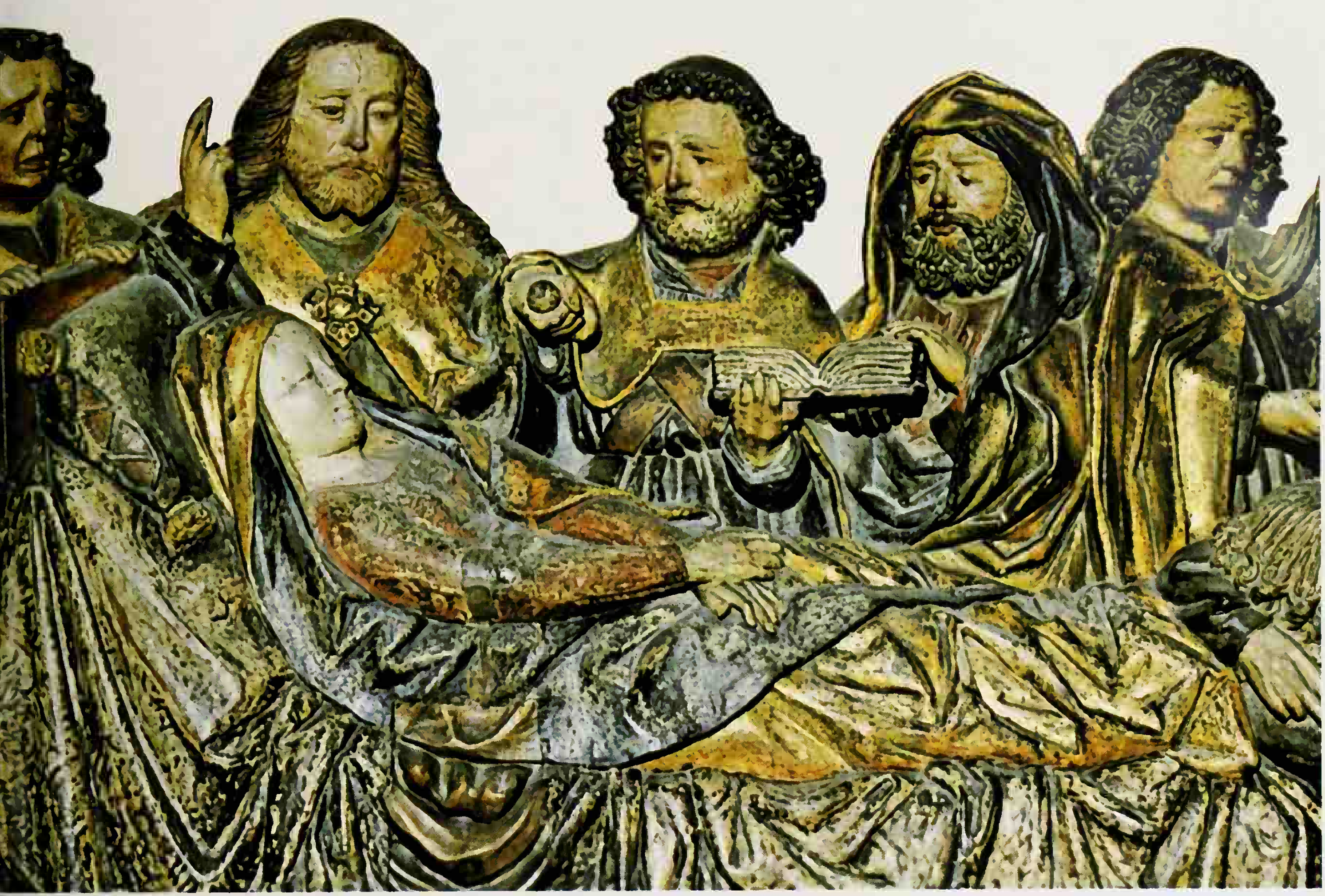
These two accounts of the Virgin Birth constitute a crux of New Testament research. They date from c 80–90 AD, and appear to be variants of a tradition that the birth of Jesus had not been a normal human birth. Since the Virgin Birth is not recorded by the gospel of Mark, which was written about 71 AD, it would seem that the notion had not by that date become an established tradition. How it did originate remains a mystery. Jewish rabbinical tradition apparently knew Jesus as 'Jesus ben Pandera', insinuating that he was the illegitimate son of Mary and a Roman soldier named Pandera, or Pantere. It is generally thought that this name was a corruption of the Greek word *Parthenos*, virgin, and that it derived from an early Jewish attempt to calumniate Jesus, by misrepresenting the Christian tradition.

Whatever the origin of the story of the Virgin Birth, it is certain that the idea was primarily intended to attest to the divine nature of Jesus, and not to exalt the status of his mother. So far as the New Testament evidence goes, Mary had no special position in the original Christian community at Jerusalem. The Acts of the Apostles only mentions the fact of her membership of that community (1.14), and the gospel of John records that the dying Jesus commended his mother to his favourite disciple.

The New Testament writings clearly indicate that Mary had other children; mention of Jesus being her first-born son occurs in Luke 2.7; Mark 3.32, 6.3; Acts 1.14. James, the brother of Jesus, became leader of the Church of Jerusalem (Galatians 1.19, 2.9; Acts 15.13, 21.18) doubtless because he was the chief male relative. It would seem that Joseph, Mary's husband, had died at an earlier date.

Emphasis on Purity

The evidence of the New Testament suggests, then, rather surprisingly, that Mary was accorded no particular prestige or status among the 1st century Christians, despite the marvellous story of the Virgin Birth. This situation continued in the Church until the 4th century, although


William Macquitty

evotion to the mother of Jesus as the Queen f Heaven 'demonstrated the importance of the emale in the thought and feelings of ordinary eople when expressed in religious faith and ractice', and veneration of Mary continues n Roman Catholic countries *Above* Late 15th entury German wood carving of the death of ne Virgin *Left* Figure of the Madonna in the aster Procession at Trapani, Sicily

nere were signs of a new interest in Mary nat presaged her future exaltation.

In the 2nd century an apocryphal writing nown as the Book of James or the Protovangelium was produced. Its purpose vas to supply an account of Mary from her irth until she bore Jesus. It was doubtless omposed in response to a popular demand or more knowledge about Mary than the neagre statements in the New Testament ave. The Protoevangelium tells how the arents of Mary, Joachim and Anna, were ivinely informed of her coming birth. Then, t the age of three, Mary is taken to the 'emple, where she lived until she was 12 ears old. The divine selection of Joseph, widower, to be her guardian is next escribed, followed by a circumstantial ccount of the events that led up to the irth of Jesus. Throughout the work, upreme emphasis is laid upon the purity nd virginity of Mary, thus anticipating that spect of Mary which becomes a major neme of her later cult.

The great controversies of the 4th and 5th enturies concerning the divinity of Christ nd the constitution of his nature increased the theological importance of Mary. The champion of orthodoxy, St Athanasius, designated Mary *theotokos*, 'God-bearer', because 'from the flesh of holy Mary the Son of God by essence and nature did proceed'. Thus, in order to refute the suggestion that Jesus was a man raised to divinity, the significance of the Virgin Birth was stressed, and Mary as the Mother of God was consequently exalted. The title Theotokos became the test-word of orthodoxy in the later struggle with Nestorianism, which maintained that in the Incarnate Christ there were two persons, one divine and the other human. The title was formally incorporated in the definition of the orthodox faith proclaimed at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

The development of the doctrine of original sin, the taint of which was transmitted to each newly-conceived child through the sex act, led to increasing emphasis upon the Virgin Birth of Christ. St Augustine of Hippo, the great exponent of the doctrine, wrote of the Virgin Mary, 'her body transmits it not to the Body of Christ, which she did not conceive through concupiscence'. It was inevitable from the stress laid upon Mary's virginity when she conceived Christ, that the idea of her perpetual virginity (*aeiparthenos*) should emerge. The brothers and sisters of Jesus, to whom reference is made in the New Testament writings, were in consequence held to be the children of Joseph by an earlier wife. Jerome, the great 5th century protagonist of virginity as the superior form of the Christian life, wrote

Our Lady of Flowers

The association between divinity and plants is very ancient, and very early in mythological evolution plants, as well as birds and beasts, became attributes of divinities. One aspect of the primordial Great Mother, the primal originating force, is that of Our Lady of the Plants. The names of innumerable wild flowers reveal that they are proper to a Lady whose earlier names mostly are lost, but who is now called Mary. Lady's-bedstraw, lady's slipper, and so on, are Our Lady's. . . . Implicitly the Marian symbols include the whole world of plants, but her attributes are especially, besides the ear of corn that is also the attribute of the zodiacal *Virgo*, the lily of virginity, the violet of humility and the rose. Both in literature and in painting they are constant mediaeval references, as in St Bernard's exclamation: 'O Mary, thou art the violet of humility, the lily of purity, the rose of love.'

. . . The Virgin Mary's diadem of twelve stars derives from representations of Venus crowned with stars. And the ear of corn, which is the symbol of life springing up out of death, belongs also to the Great Mother Demeter (whom, as Cybele, the ancients garlanded with roses) and was shown, during the Greater Mysteries of Eleusis, at the sacred birth, when the immense proclamation was made: 'Our Lady has borne the Divine Child!'

Eithne Wilkins *The Rose-Garden Game*

triumphantly: 'Therefore the virgin Christ and the Virgin Mary have dedicated in themselves the first-fruits of the virginity of both sexes.'

Despite this increasing exaltation of Mary, no official sanction or encouragement was given to her cult. But popular enthusiasm could not be controlled, and for many ordinary Christians Mary took the place of the great goddesses of the Graeco-Roman world such as Isis or Cybele. It is in this context that Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (c 315–403), makes significant reference to 'certain women in Thrace, Scythia and Arabia' who worshipped Mary, offering to her a certain kind of cake, as was customary to pagan goddesses. Epiphanius condemned the practice, commenting, 'Let Mary be had in honour, but let the Lord be worshipped.'

The practice of invoking Mary's aid began to develop about this time. The earliest mention of the practice is made in the 4th century by Gregory Nazianzen, who commends the 'imploring of Mary the Virgin to come to the aid of a virgin in peril'. Such intercession quickly became established, and the Emperor Justinian (483–565) sought her help to govern and preserve the Roman Empire, while his general Narses turned to her for guidance in battle. Reference to the intercession of the Virgin also became an established feature of the liturgies of the Eastern Church and the Roman Mass. Festivals in honour of the Virgin were likewise instituted: those of her Purification (2 February) and the Annunciation (25 March) were originally feasts of the presentation of Christ in the Temple and of his conception; but Christian devotion changed their designations by concentrating on Mary's part in the incidents concerned. These festivals date respectively from the 6th and 7th centuries; festivals of Mary's Nativity (8 September) and *Dormitio* or 'Falling Asleep' (15 August) also began to be celebrated.

The last mentioned festival is of peculiar significance for the cult of Mary. It is more generally known as the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and commemorates the belief that at her death she was assumed, body and soul, into heaven. The belief seems to have originated in Christian Gnostic circles in the 4th century; but it soon commended itself to orthodox devotion. In the Western Church it was formulated as a doctrine by Gregory of Tours (d 594). In the Eastern Church, the great theologian St John Damascene (c 675–749), endorsed its supporting legend that all the Apostles witnessed the death of the Virgin, but when her tomb was opened later it was found to be empty. St John Damascene designated Mary *mesitis* (media[illegible] significant for her future cult.

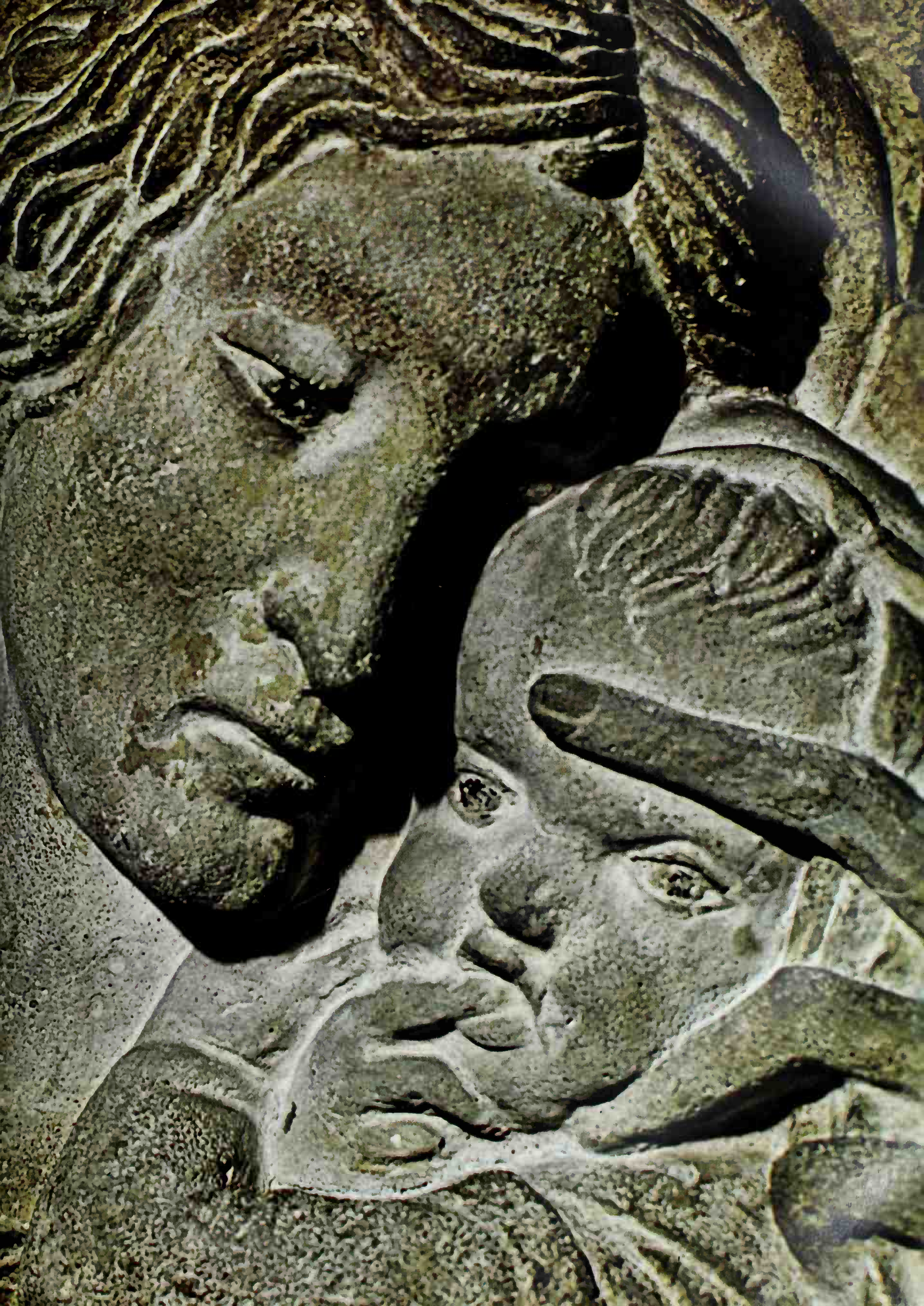
[illegible]ation and veneration of the [illegible] steadily increased during the M[illegible] until it became a veritable cult, at [illegible]ming to eclipse that of Christ in [illegible] devotion. Stories multiplied of the [illegible] of Mary's intercession and of her miraculous intervention to save those specially devoted to her. The Venerable Bede tells how St Wilfrid of Ripon (634–709) at the crisis of what seemed to be a mortal illness, saw a vision of the Archangel Michael, who told him that he was sent by Christ to call him back from death, because of 'the intercession of His blessed and ever virgin mother Mary'.

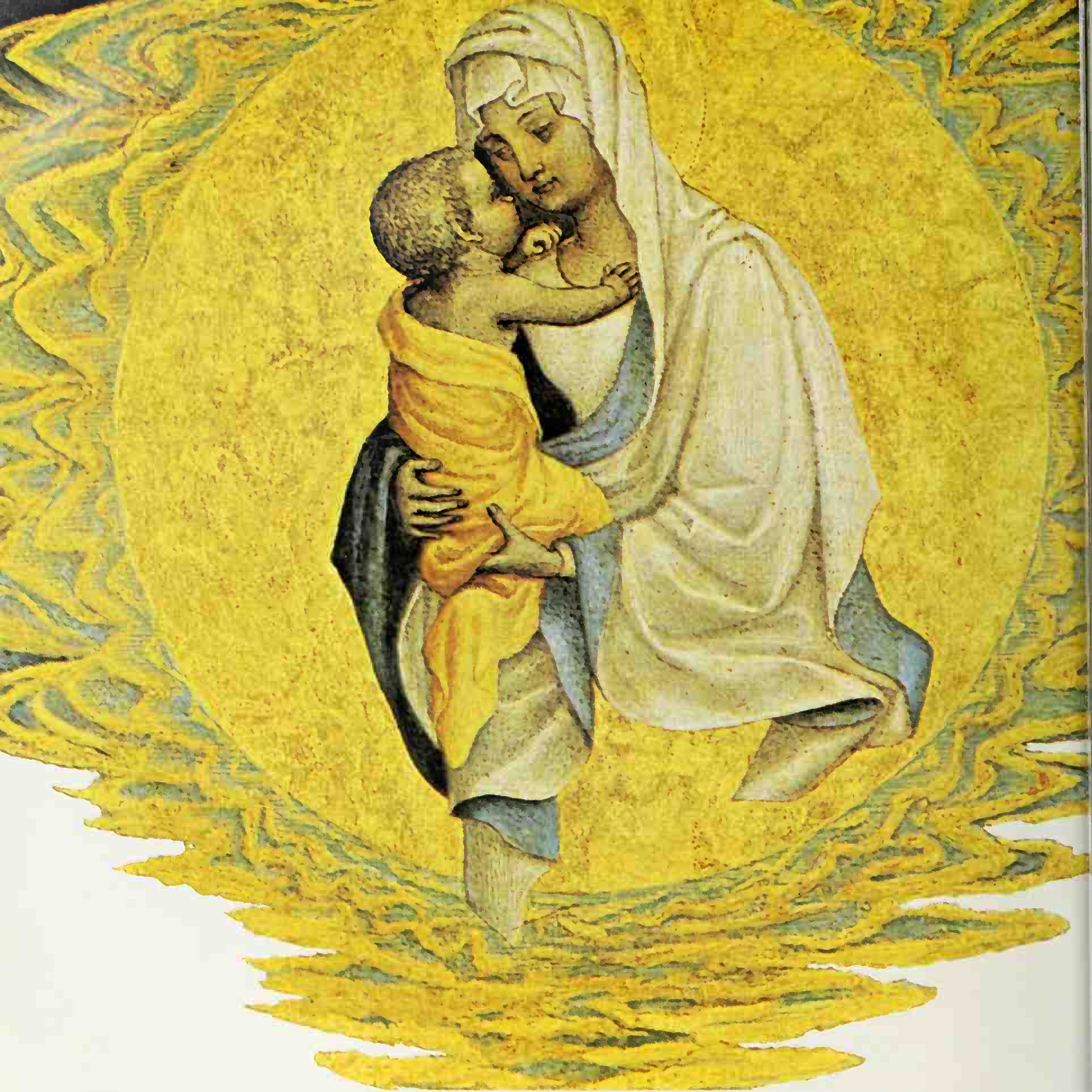
Queen of Heaven

Medieval cult of the Virgin embodied two major themes: her divinization and her role as mediatrix or reconciler. The theologian Peter Damian (1007–72) referred to Mary as *deificata* (deified), and described how Christ and his heavenly court had received her at her Assumption. Her coronation by Christ as Queen of Heaven was one of the major scenes sculptured over the portals of cathedrals and churches, many of which were dedicated to her. In contrast to the simple human portraits of the Virgin in the early Christian art of the catacombs, she was now presented in regal attire, enthroned and crowned like a Byzantine empress, as for example in the famous window in the great Cathedral of Chartres known as 'Notre-Dame de la belle verrière', (Our Lady of the beautiful stained glass window). She was even represented in some pictures with the Trinity revealed in her womb; sometimes she was shown seated side by side with God the Father and God the Son thus forming with them a divine Trinity of Father, Son and Virgin Mother. Theologians were careful, however, to distinguish between the worship due to the Father and the Son, and the veneration that might be accorded to Mary. They defined three orders of service: *latria* or worship, due only to God; *dulia*, the honour given to the saints; an *hyperdulia*, the veneration reserved to Mary But this careful distinction could not b maintained in popular devotion, and Mar was often worshipped as though she wer a goddess.

Mary's role as the mediatrix is significantly stated by St Bernard (1090–1153) 'If you fear the Father there is Christ th Mediator. If you fear Him, Who, thoug Man, is also God, there is His Mother, pur humanity. She will listen to thee. The So will listen to her, the Father to Him.' It wa at the Last Judgement that Mary's mediation was especially sought, and it became o an established theme of the medieval Doo (see JUDGEMENT OF THE DEAD). In wha is known as the *Deisis*, Mary is shown, sometimes with St John, kneeling and supplicating the stern Christ, as he sits in fina judgement on mankind, to have mercy o human frailty. A particularly interestin version of the theme occurs on the famou *Mappa Mundi* Picture (c1300) in Herefor Cathedral. The Virgin is there represente as exposing her maternal breasts and invoking her Son to spare sinful humanity.

The New Testament contains accounts of th Virgin Birth of Jesus but suggests that Mar enjoyed no particular prestige or status in 1s century Christianity. But later, 'for man ordinary Christians Mary took the place of the great goddesses of the Graeco-Roman world ***Right*** **Virgin and Child: Italian, 15th centur** ***Below*** **Our Lady of the Pines, a regal an bejewelled Madonna of the Canary Island**





National Gallery/Michael Holford

Mary was seen as the ideal of womanhood, beautiful, virtuous and merciful, who interceded for sinners. Theologians distinguished between the worship due only to God and the veneration to be accorded to Mary. The distinction was blurred in popular devotion: detail from *St Anthony and St George,* by Pisanello

The cult of the Virgin during the Middle Ages had many far-reaching effects. Its influence will be traced in the ideals of chivalry and in the poetry of the troubadours. She represented the ideal woman, both in beauty and virtue, and she inspired some of the finest creations of medieval art. An immense devotional and hagiographical literature grew up around her. In many places her alleged relics attracted crowds of pilgrims; in England, Walsingham was a notable shrine of her cult.

Mariolatry (worship of the Virgin) inevitably incurred the condemnation of the Reformers, and in Protestant countries the veneration of Mary abruptly ceased. In Catholic countries her cult has continued to flourish, with the foundation of famous new cult centres at Lourdes (1858 – see LOURDES) and Fatima (1917), in response to visions seen in these places. Papal authority has also erected two long established beliefs about Mary into dogmas of the Roman Catholic faith. In 1854 Pope Pius IX promulgated the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which was a kind of logical corollary to the Virgin Birth of Christ. It maintained that, from the very moment of conception, Mary had been kept free, by divine grace, from all stain of original sin. The dogma of her Assumption, which had been a popular belief from the 4th century, was finally promulgated by Pope Pius XII in 1950, thus officially completing the supernatural cycle of the career of Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus.

S. G. F. BRANDON

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John Moss

Two Masai women singing at a gathering: their shaven heads are marks of the 'crude masculine contempt' for women in a warlike, male-oriented society

Fresh blood is one of the regular items of the Masai diet – appropriately, since the entire training of a boy of this tribe is geared to turning him into a fighter

MASAI

A NOMADIC PEOPLE occupying most of Central Kenya and Tanzania, the Masai once roamed freely all over the plains of East Africa with their cattle. Because they had to keep moving to find enough fodder for their herds, they had no sophisticated agriculture and no permanent settlements. They have never recognized any authority but that of their own leaders. According to their legends, there was nobody else who mattered except the Masai and their cows.

In appearance, they are a tall, well-built people, easily recognizable as the men go practically naked, the heads of the women are shaved, the middle teeth of the lower jaw are pulled out, and their characteristic 'at ease' posture is standing on one leg.

The Masai's entire social structure, religion, tradition and myth, which are now threatened by the encroachment of civilization, are based on war and cattle-herding. The men do the fighting; the women do almost everything else that needs to be done. Work is beneath a man's dignity, since all adult males are either serving or retired warriors. The young men spend all their time in the bush, looking for fights or gorging themselves on meat; the middle-aged men occupy themselves with animal husbandry; and the older men do almost nothing at all. Women, aided by very young children, bear the brunt of keeping the tribal economy working.

At about the age of 13, the boys are taken from their homes and put into separate villages where they are schooled to become warriors. They are now subject to the strictest discipline. Smoking and drinking (the Masai are great drinkers of beer) are forbidden. Their diet consists only of meat, the fresh blood of cows, and milk. The climax of months of severe training is the circumcision ceremony, performed by the medicine-man with a stone knife. A boy who cries out or winces during this painful operation is deemed unworthy of becoming a warrior. Girls who undergo circumcision (clitoridectomy) are allowed to express their feelings.

After the circumcision ceremony, the boys are officially proclaimed Junior Warriors, and all those admitted to the ranks at the same time are said to belong to the same 'Age', or clan. They will be known collectively by a distinctive name which they choose for themselves, like 'White Swords', or 'The Invincibles'.

The Junior Warriors plait their hair into a pigtail and, except for a small skin thrown over their shoulders, go absolutely naked. They live in separate kraals with the unmarried girls of their own 'Age', with whom they are allowed to cohabit freely. These are girls who have not yet been circumcised, though once they have undergone this ritual mutilation they are expected to settle to become wives and mothers.

It is this clan of Junior Warriors that makes up the standing army of the Masai, a cadre of young, virile men who attack the enemy, conquer new territory for the wandering herds, and amuse themselves by going on lion hunts, allowing the rest of the community to live in peace and security.

At about the age of 25, the Junior Warriors move up into the class of Senior Warriors. These are the older fighters who now become the reserve troops in case of a serious war. But, in general, the Senior Warriors accept the fact that their period of active service is ended and they are now free to marry and devote their time to the management of their cattle. The senior Warriors as they grow older move up into the class of Junior Elders, and so in the course of time become Seniors who, by reason of their age and experience, act as the counsellors of the community.

Masai women, on the other hand, have few rights and little status in this militaristic society and are generally regarded merely as the bearers of children and cattle-herders. They have also to undergo circumcision, and must wear the iron neck and leg bands which symbolize feminine serfdom.

Medicine-Man and Surgeon

The nearest approach to a central authority is the *laibon*, or medicine-man, whose influence and importance derive from his powers of divination, prophecy and healing. He is responsible for the religious well-being of the tribe and their cattle, but it does not appear that the laibon enjoys any special relationship with the deity, since the Masai have no clearly defined notion of a supreme being. They recognize a deity they call *Eng-ai* and two lesser gods, one black and the other red. The former is beneficent; the latter maleficent. The former sends rain – the latter droughts.

Below **Masai woman: the men do the fighting, the women almost everything else that needs to be done. Work is beneath a man's dignity, since all adult males are either serving or retired warriors. As a Masai proverb has it: 'Happiness is to lie on one's back surrounded by many sons'** ***Right*** **Young boys take part in a tribal dance: after months of severe training, they will be circumcised and finally accepted as Junior Warriors**

Federico & Aldo Patellani

These gods, as in nearly all African religions, are remote from ordinary humans. The medicine-man, therefore, acts as an intermediary, but relies on his own magical powers to deal with current problems and to forecast the future. He dispenses charms to the warriors when they go on raids; acts as high priest at tribal ceremonies; interprets dreams; makes rain; and serves as physician and surgeon.

His practices and procedures may strike the Western observer as strange, but he knows how to employ skilfully a variety of herbal and magical cures based upon empirical remedies handed down by his predecessors over hundreds of years. His principal task is to attend to wounds in view of the many casualties among the warriors.

Another very important function of the medicine-man is to supervise the trials by ordeal. Trial by ordeal is practised whenever black magic is suspected and it usually consists of administering poison to those who may be guilty, the theory being that the innocent will be spared. But the Masai variety of this dreaded ordeal is relatively humane, since a suspect has only to say the formula 'If I have done this deed may God forgive me', drink the fresh blood of a cow, and await the results. If he is guilty, it is firmly believed that he will drop dead. If he is not, no harm will befall him.

Because their animals need large tracts of land, the Masai have become a warrior race, with nothing else mattering to them but the protection of their herds. They engage neither in agriculture nor even in hunting, except for lions and beasts of prey which are a danger to their livestock. The warriors refuse to eat vegetables, fruit, and even game. Their staple diet is meat and the blood they draw off from the jugular veins of their cows.

Even during the British colonial period, the Masai managed to remain aloof and independent, despite the efforts of administrators, missionaries, schoolmasters, tax-collectors, and all those who sought to change their way of life. Today, their problems are the inroads of civilization, the shrinkage of available pasturage, and the determination of the new states to abolish the old tribal patterns of African society.

JAMES WELLARD

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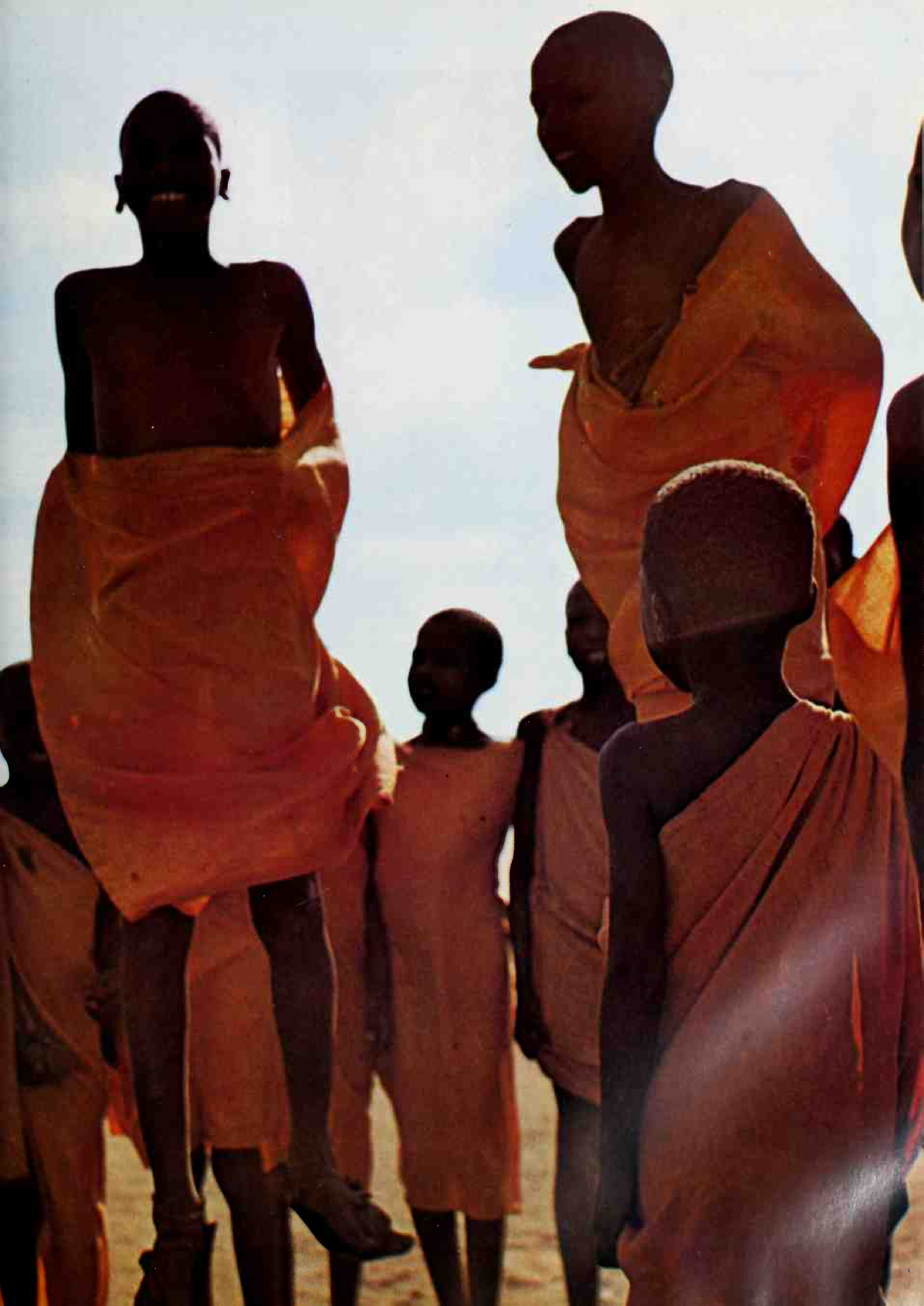


MASKS

Means to a Change of Identity

Put on a mask and you become a different person. In many primitive societies a mask is more than a means of changing your appearance; it is a link with the world of the spirits, a channel by which men can tap the force possessed by supernatural beings

SINCE PREHISTORIC TIMES masks or 'false faces' have been used for a variety of purposes, both religious and profane. Their distribution ranges widely over time and space. Whereas in some civilizations masks play an important part in ritual activities, there are regions of the world where the use of masks has never been known.

The earliest pictorial representations of human beings wearing masks occur in the cave paintings and rock engravings of the Old Stone Age of France and Spain (c 20,000 BC) where dancers wearing animal masks are depicted next to animals of the same species (see CAVE ART; ICONOGRAPHY). Comparisons with similar masked dances among present-day primitive peoples suggest that the dances performed by Paleolithic hunters were intended to bring bison and other game under their influence by magical means. There are also representations of masked men whose attire combines parts of several different animals. Disguise in animal shape may also have had a practical purpose. Dressed in the skin of an animal a hunter can creep unsuspected near to his prey, and this device is still used by such primitive tribes as the African Bushmen and was at one time common practice among many Indian tribes of North America.

Hidden Identity

In primitive societies of today, masks are used mainly for ritual purposes. The donning of a mask is believed to change a man's identity and faculties, for the assumed appearance is held to affect the wearer's personality and to assimilate it to that of the being represented by the mask. Thus a masked person is not simply a man or woman whose own identity is hidden, but he is an enigmatic being standing outside the sphere of ordinary conduct and enjoying a freedom of movement and expression denied to ordinary men. As he has submerged his own identity by the wearing of a mask, other beings, such as an ancestor, a spirit or a totem-animal, are enabled to manifest themselves in his body and voice.

The material shapes of masks are of infinite variety. A moulded or carved surface representing the anterior half of the head and usually worn over the face of a person may be made of wood, metal, cloth, leather, clay or, in rare cases, even stone. A special type of mask, occurring in Melanesia, consists of part of a human skull combined with other materials to form a complete covering for the wearer's head and face. The transforming effect of a mask may also be achieved by applying thick layers of paste or paint to the face of a person, to which feathers and similar materials are then attached. Such mask-like disguises, usually combined with the painting of the entire body, occurred among Australian aboriginals and among the Fuegians of South America. In a highly-developed artistic form the practice of building up a mask on a human face, is used by the Katha-Kali dancers of south-west India.

The mask in the narrow sense, which covers the face of the wearer, usually forms only part of the disguise. Elaborate costumes, often of fantastic type, complete the attire disguising a person's normal appearance. Where masks represent supernatural beings, such as gods or ancestor spirits, the illusion of superhuman height is achieved by a structure supporting an artificial head and face, which surmounts the real head of the dancer or actor. A similar effect is achieved by fitting the wearer with stilts, which are often covered by long flowing garments. The great dance masks of Melanesia are enormous structures made of bark cloth stretched over bamboo and cane frames, which are carried by one or more dancers. Such masks are intended to impress and fill with awe the uninitiated who are made to believe that divinities and ancestor spirits manifest themselves in these gigantic structures. To achieve this deception it is essential that the human wearers of the masks are completely hidden and unrecognizable.

Repository of Sacred Power

According to their function masks can be divided into two categories, the religious and the profane; the former category, comprising a large number of sub-types, predominates in pre-literate societies as well as in several historic civilizations. Among the most striking and spectacular masks are those worn by dancers in the ritual performances of various West African tribes. The Dogon of the western Sudan commemorate the death of their first tribal ancestor by ceremonies which involve the use of a series of masks of different degrees of sanctity and of varying appearance. The vertical wooden rectangle of these helmet-type masks, surmounted by upright carved animal ears, represents the main form and by its crude shape and the painting in white, black and red creates a dramatic effect; such masks are used in connection with initiation rites, burial and other ceremonies.

The task of carving these masks, which attract great magical powers, was considered highly dangerous and the wood-carvers protected themselves by observing many taboos and performing a series of propitiatory rites. They first offered a sacrifice to the greatest of all Dogon masks, which represents the deified original tribal ancestor. The making of the masks was a common enterprise of all the dancers, who assembled for the purpose outside the village. Only the fully initiated members of a secret society could with impunity approach the mask and vessel of the divine ancestor. Every 60 years they arranged for a solemn rite in the course of which the supreme ancestral mask was renewed. It is from this central mask, representing the tribal ancestor, that all the other masks derive the power to retain in themselves the imperishable life-force of the animal or departed person whom they symbolize. The transmission of this force is produced by sacred rites laid down by tradition.

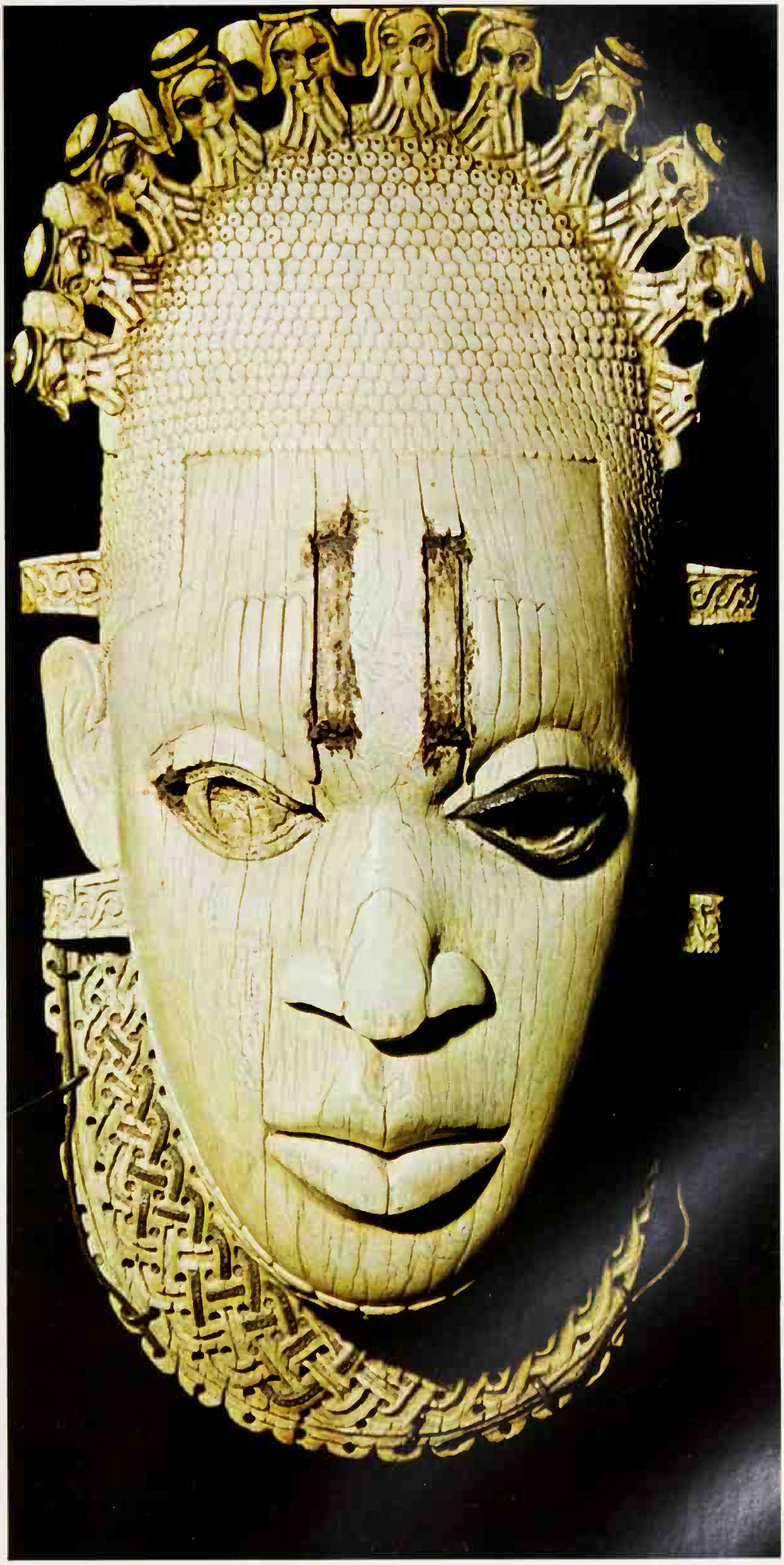
Among other West African tribes, such as the Kono of Guinea, the carving of masks is equally surrounded by elaborate ceremonial. The grand master of the tribal initiation rites is the supreme guardian of all the masks. His function is hereditary, and he controls the wearers of the individual masks. Each of these receives special instructions as to how to minister to the needs of the mask of which he is in charge. He is thought of as the host of the mask and the spiritual essence dwelling in its shape.

Although the masks are fashioned by human hand, they are believed to have an individual existence, independent of the craftsmen who gave them their material hape and the dancers through whom they ltimately come to life. The myths never peak of the manufacture of masks but lways of their discovery, and they are elieved to have existed long before they ame into the possession of men. In the ask resides the subtle spirit-substance hich invests them with their latent power. he task of the sculptor thus consists in roviding the mask – or rather the spirit of he mask – with a new vehicle when the ld one has deteriorated and become unsable. The masks are the property and ult objects of the secret societies, which lay so important a role in the tribal initiaion rites.

ersonifying the Supernatural

n Melanesia, another area where ritual asks have been widely used, the masks ere mainly associated with the cult of ncestors. In the islands of New Ireland, ew Britain, the Solomons and most of the ew Hebrides, this cult has largely sucumbed to contact with European civilizaion, but in some parts of New Guinea it as retained its importance. In all these egions the masks, carved of wood or contructed of bark cloth, and sometimes more han 15 feet tall, were produced and uarded by the members of secret societies r men's organizations. Among the Papuans f south-west New Guinea masks are mployed in the ritual of death. This ritual ims at expelling from the village the spirits f the dead who might endanger the living, n particular the spirits of those who fall ictims to headhunters. These spirits are ersonified in masked dancers, who should e kinsmen of the deceased. The manufacure of the masks very frequently extends ver four to five months, and is surrounded y great mystery.

When the masks are completed they are tored in the ceremonial men's house until he day of the final rites. At that time the insmen of the recently deceased take the



C. M. Dixon

asks are sometimes marks of distinction: 'the uman guardian and wearer of the mask parakes of the power of the spirit or divinity hich the mask symbolizes and is thereby levated above the common mass of the ninitiated', 16th century mask worn at the aist by the Oba or ruler of the West African ingdom of Benin; now in the British Museum

Camera Press London

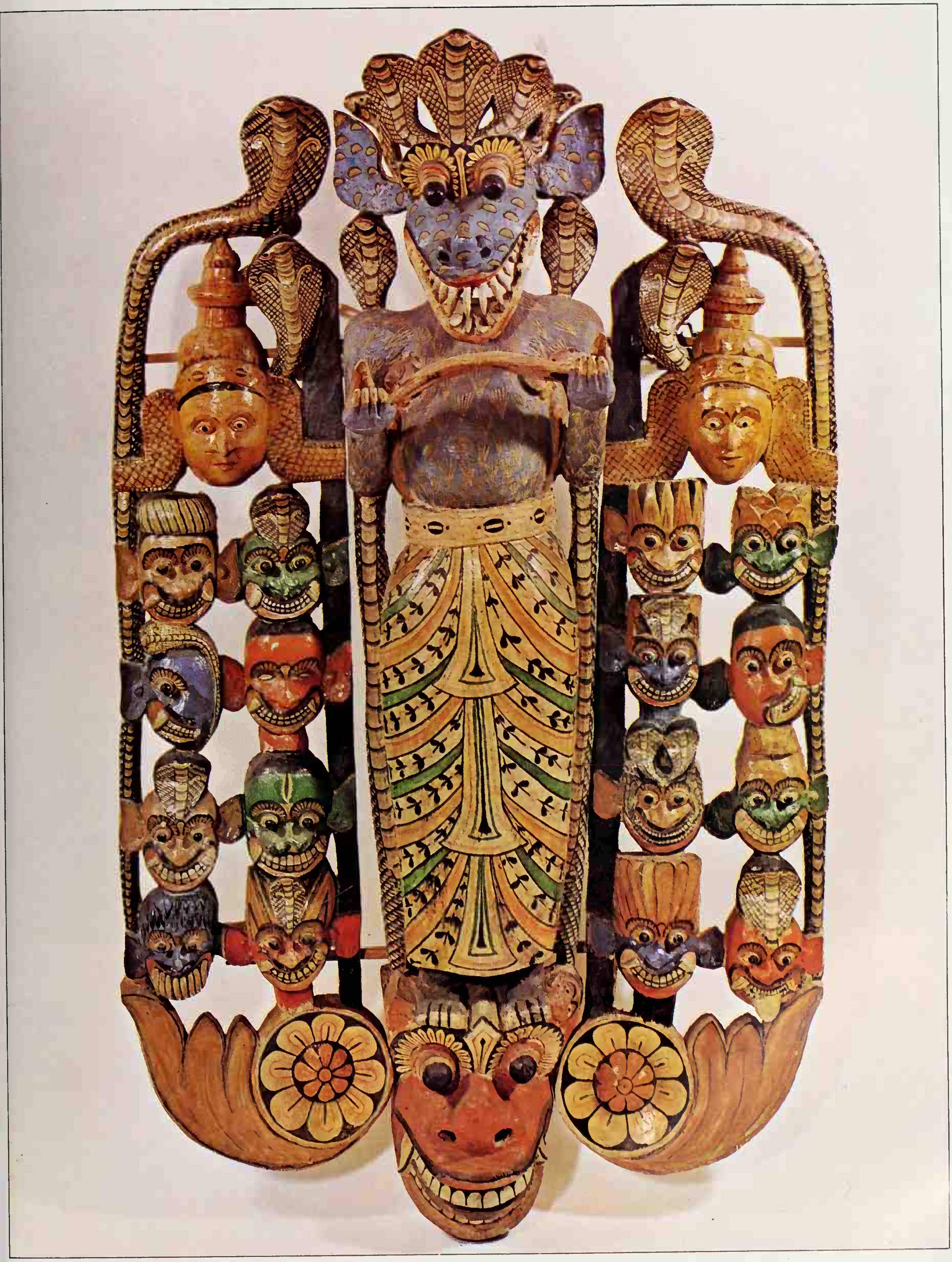
In the Sepik region of New Guinea, masks combining human with bird or animal elements, give them an especially demonic and terrifying character

newly-made masks to the forest, and attach fresh green leaves to them and to their own bodies. Thus attired they emerge from the forest at dusk, and then dance for the whole night, imitating the movements of the cassowary, the bird associated with the sun. In the moment of sunrise, when the sun is believed to emerge from the land of the dead, the remaining men of the village attack the dancers and defeat them in a sham fight. This victory symbolizes the successful struggle of the living over the dead. The dancers seek refuge in the house of ceremonies, and discard their masks. These are henceforth devoid of sanctity and ritual value.

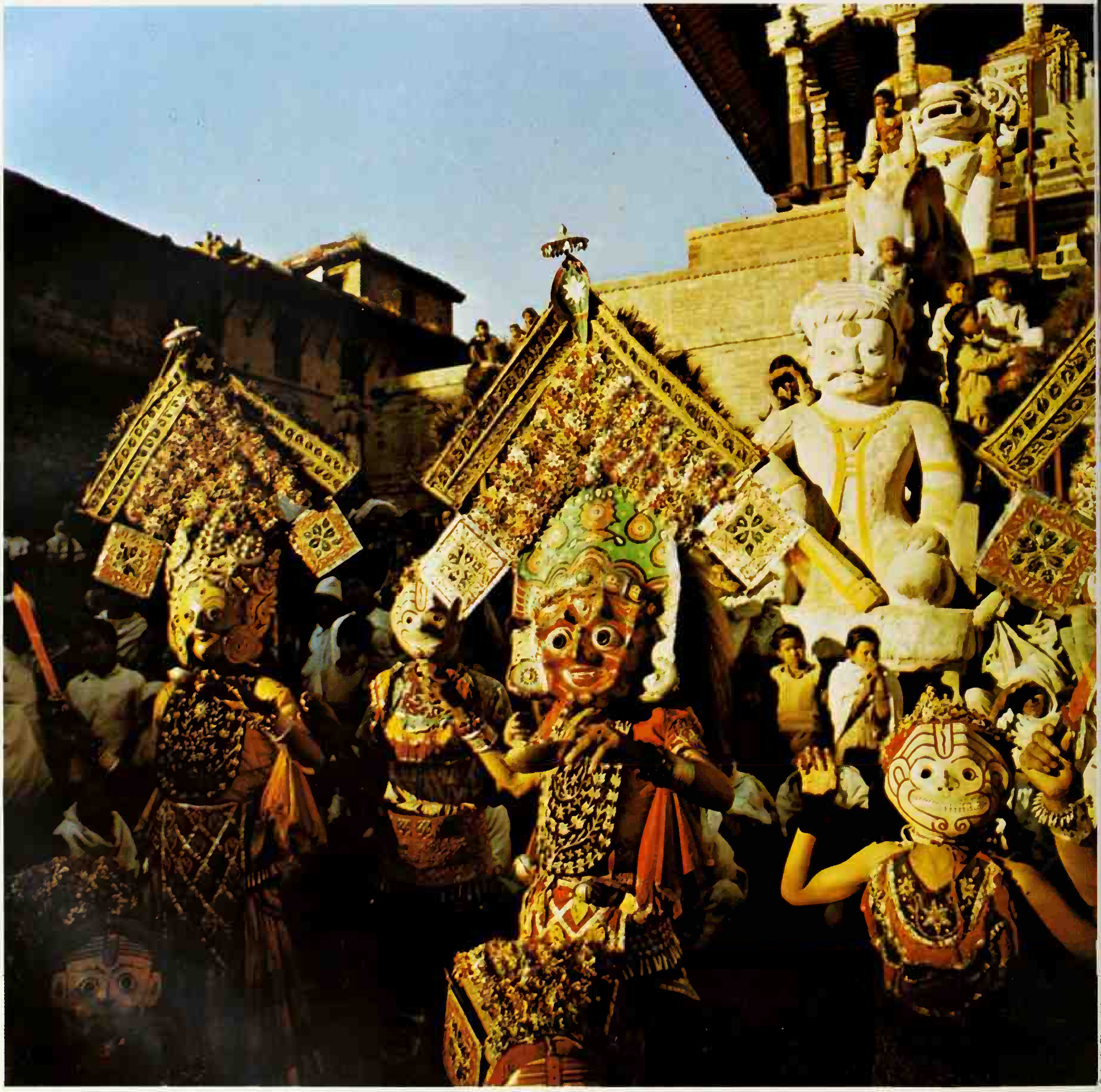
In the Sepik region of New Guinea, masks carved with stone tools combined human with bird or animal elements. Their elongation and ambiguous animal forms give them an especially demonic and terrifying character. Some of these masks served in public harvest and initiation rites, others depicted the semi-supernatural founders of clans in ceremonies of a more secret nature. The uninitiated – women, children and strangers – were rigidly excluded from participating in these rites.

Masks representing supernatural beings, half-human and half-animal, occur also in other parts of the world, notably among the Indians of the north-west coast of America. Like many primitive peoples, these Indians believe that animals as well as humans are animated by souls and that the barrier between them is slight. Their sculptured masks depict strange creatures with human faces and animal horns, or beings combining the elements of men and birds. In the ceremonies of these Indians masks with moving parts played an important role. The carved and painted flaps of such masks were hinged; when closed they represented ravens

Wearing a mask, frequently with an elaborate costume as well, is a way of concealing and submerging your own personality and identifying yourself with a spirit or other supernatural character in dance or drama *Above left* This Nigerian dancer wears a mask of anonymity *Above* A masked figure named Gulliver appears in May Day celebrations at Minehead in Somerset *Right* Singhalese dance mask with grotesque figures



Michael Holford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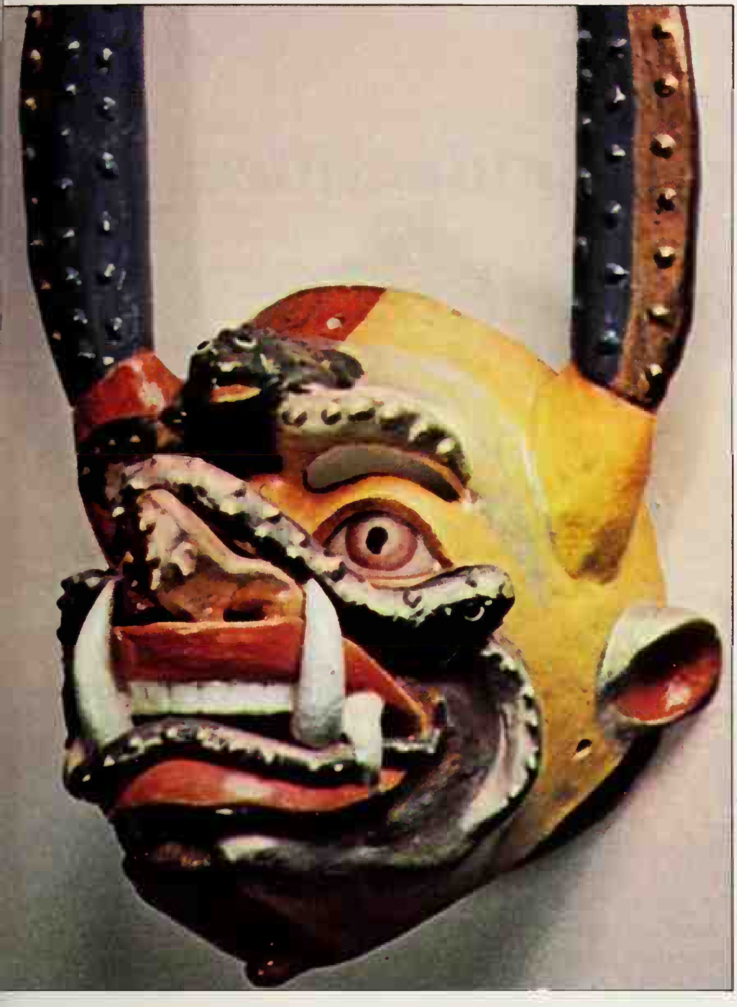
Above Masked dancers perform before a temple in Nepal during the festival of Indra Jatra. The yellow figure represents the goddess Kali and the red figure is an evil spirit who is killed by Kali at the end of the dance ***Right*** Mask representing the 'spirit of wealth', made by miners in Bolivia in the mid-1960s in celebration of the wealth yielded by the mine: now in the Horniman Museum

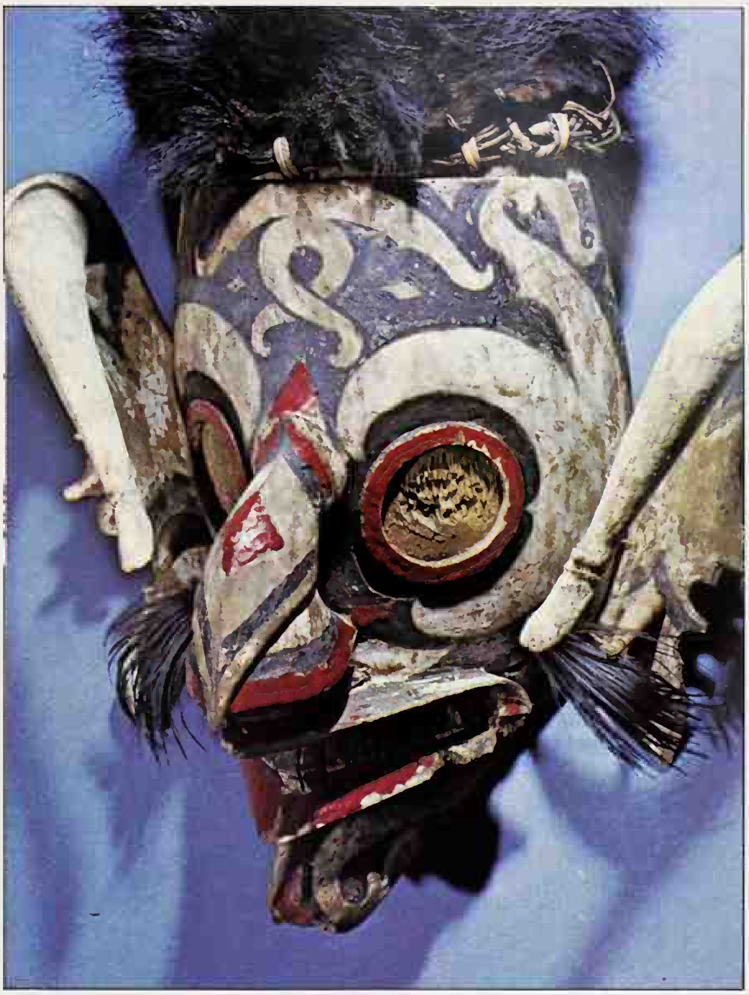
and concealed the image of a human face. At an appropriate moment in the recounting of a legend the performer pulled open the flaps to reveal a transformation from animal to man.

The Eskimo carve wooden masks in the likeness of fish and various sea animals. These masks are not intended to represent the animals themselves, but to symbolize the [illegible] spirits associated with animals. Of a different order are the masks of shamans – priests and spirit-media – who establish contact between man and the world of supernatural beings (see SHAMAN). The shamans of the Eskimo have masks representing their guardian spirits, and they believe that by wearing these masks they establish a mystic link with the spirit concerned and induce a state of trance and possession. Other Eskimo masks depict a face which is half-human and half-animal, and they are used in rites and dances designed to propitiate the spirits of certain animals in order to prevent them from shunning man and depriving him of the animals necessary for his subsistence.

Different in function and shape are the death-masks used to cover the face of the dead before or after burial. Such masks made of gold, silver, bronze, terracotta or stone occurred in many ancient civilizations including those of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Italy, the Crimea, the Danube valley and parts of ancient France and Britain. Death-masks of precious metal covered the faces of the embalmed pharaohs, and from Egypt the custom spread to Syria and Mycene. The ancient Etruscans also buried their dead with masks of thin bronze. In Southeast Asia gold masks were regularly placed on the faces of dead kings of Cambodia and Siam, and the Shans of Burma used a metal mask to cover the face of a dead chief. In ancient Mexico masks,



Museum of the American Indian



In Tibet it was usual for the spectators to prostrate themselves before the masked figures of gods, and to solicit their blessing

Some masks are surrounded by taboos and, though made by human beings, are believed to have their own individual existence, ndependent of the craftsmen who shaped them and the dancers who wear them: sometimes it is said that these masks are not 'made' but 'discovered'. Hideous, grotesque and terrifying masks, often combining human characteristics with animal or bird forms, may represent evil spirits, or the semi-human ancestors of clans or kin-groups, or ferocious guardian spirits which keep evil forces at bay; they appear in many different types of ritual

Facing page Devil mask from the Tyrol *(above)*: Tibetan mask of a fierce protective spirit *(below)* *Above left* Horned mask from Bolivia, used in the performance of a devil dance *Above right* Beaked mask from Indonesia

some made of jade and other semi-precious stones, were placed on the faces of prominent dead when the corpse was laid out in a grave chamber. They are without openings for mouth and eyes and represent faces of a great calm and beauty.

The Face of a God

In advanced civilizations masks have been mainly used in dramatic performances, both ritual and theatrical. One of the most notable examples of striking and elaborate masks are those worn by lama-dancers in Tibetan temple festivals. These masks, mainly of superhuman size, represent divinities, demons, spirits, historical personages and allegoric figures. They are usually carved of wood and painted in vivid colours. The masked dances are accompanied by the recitation of prayers and sacred texts.

The laymen see in the masked figures not so much lamas enacting gods and demons, but rather the mystic presence of the divinities and demons represented by the masks. In Tibet it was usual for the spectators to prostrate themselves before the masked figures of gods, and to solicit their blessing. The mystery play here assumes the character of an immediate interaction between man and supernatural powers.

Masked dances on the Indonesian island of Bali are also of ritual nature, but in other Asian countries, such as Ceylon, masks originally having religious importance are used in dramatic performances which are

The warrior wearing a mask symbolizing a superior power identifies himself with this force and is thereby fortified in spirit

given for entertainment by professional dancers. Yet, masks are used there also in rites of exorcism and curing, and in these cases masks represent the disease spirits from which the patient is to be freed.

Where the mask has lost its religious significance it can still survive in a secular role. Typical of this development was the role it assumed in the theatre of ancient Greece (see DRAMA). Originally animal masks had been used in the cult of Dionysus and Demeter, the Earth Mother. Later the mask found its way into both the comedies and the tragedies of the classical theatre, where it played an important role. The use of masks enabled actors to double and triple the number of parts they could play during any one performance, and male actors could convincingly play female roles.

Another example of the transference of the mask's function from the religious to the secular sphere occurs in Japan. There masks were originally widely used in religious ritual, and in the 8th century AD dancers in four-eyed masks were charged with the task of warding off demons from the royal palace. Later there developed the institution of court dancers, and out of this grew the classical drama of the *Noh* theatre, in which all actors appear in painted masks.

In Europe the use of ritual masks persists only in some folk customs observed in some remote valleys of Austria and Switzerland, where pagan practices have coexisted with Christianity in a reinterpreted form. The Carnival, celebrated widely in Europe and Latin America, provides an opportunity for the wearing of masks (see FOOL), but the fact that it is a survival of a pagan spring festival is forgotten.

Purpose Behind the Mask

Protection against supernatural dangers is a function of masks worn in certain ritual situations, such as at funerals to avoid recognition by the souls of the dead. Conversely masks are sometimes worn to enhance a warrior's image and to terrify opponents, and this idea underlies the war-masks and use of war-paint among many primitive peoples. The warrior wearing a mask symbolizing a superior power identifies himself with this force and is thereby fortified in spirit. This identification is part

Peter Boyce

Living Solid Face

Of all the masked gods the strangest and most engaging is that kindly, grotesque creation of the Delaware Indians which goes by the name of Misinghalikun – the Living Solid Face. When Egyptian priests appeared, as Apuleius pictured them, masked as Isis or Horus, they represented a deity that had his proper human form as well as his disguise as an animal. But the Living Solid Face is what it says it is – a mask, a living mask. When the Indians first saw Misinghalikun riding a buck, and herding the deer, it was simply a fir-clad figure with a wooden face, the right half red, the left black. Following a disaster, the Living Solid Face taught the Delawares to make a mask like his, and promised that when they wore it his spirit would go into it. Every year Misinghalikun appears at the ceremonies of the tribe, and on the third day sees them off upon a hunt, the twelfth night he dances in the Big House, where his face is carved upon twelve pillars. His mask, his black bearskin clothes, his turtle rattle, and his stick are kept by a family that burns tobacco before it now and then. The Living Solid Face is a bit of a moralist at the Big House meeting, and, when a parent finds his child weak, sick or disobedient, Misinghalikun is ready to attend. But his main function is general beneficent guidance over the tribe and the hunt.

K. MacGowan and H. Rosse
Masks and Demons

of the nature of masks, and it assumes enormous importance where people wear masks representing gods and other supernatural beings.

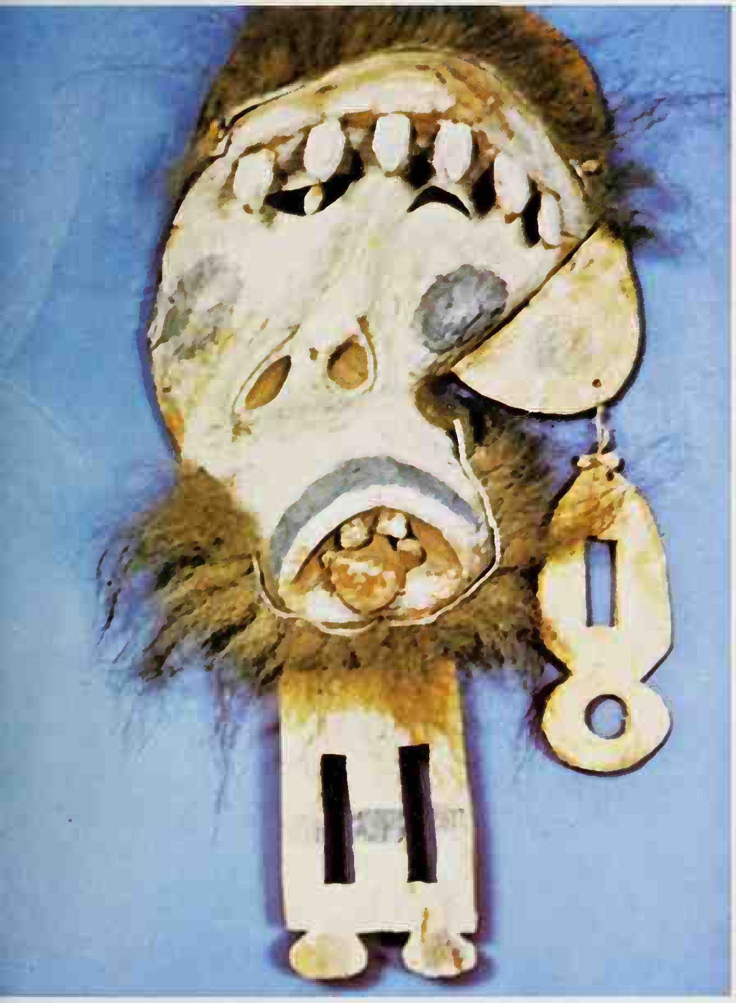
Masks serve also as signs of distinction and classification. Thus all the ritual masks of men's societies have the function of emphasizing the position of the fully initiated members and in some societies distinctive masks are reserved for those who have achieved specific grades in the organization.

The masks of such societies have also the function of concentrating power in the hands of those who are in charge of the sacred objects. Thus they are linked not only with the representation of power, but also with its exercise. The human guardian and wearer of the mask partakes of the power of the divinity or spirit which the mask symbolizes and is thereby elevated above the common mass of the uninitiated. The mask is thus a link with the supernatural world and a channel by which men can tap the force possessed by supernatural beings. Thus masks are and always were primarily means of transformation and identification with the entities of a non-material sphere to which man has access only if he sheds his own identity and enters that of beings existing on a superior plane.

C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

FURTHER READINGS: D. Cordy, *Mexican Masks* (Univ. of Texas Press, 1980); N. Cumrine and M. Halpin, eds., *The Power of Symbols: Masks and Masquerade in the Americas.*

Facing page **Ugly masks are still worn by children at parties or on occasions like Hallowe'en in Europe and North America *(left)*: hunchbacked leader of the 'Dance of the Old Men' *(right)* performed at a remote village on the shore of Lake Patzcuaro in Mexico; it is believed that beating the eight 'old men' will bring rain for the crops *Below left* Eskimo mask representing the Watchman of the Sky: Eskimo masks represent the spirits of fish and sea animals, or the guardian spirits of shamans, who wear them to establish a link with the spirits *Below right* Masks may be worn to avoid recognition or to frighten enemies: a simple mask combining both principles is the stocking over the head *Following page* Singhalese mask of a disease spirit, used in healing rituals**



Museum of the American Indian

Peter Boyce

Michael Holford

MASS

THE HEART of Christian worship, the most important ceremony of the Christian Churches, is the Eucharist (from Greek, usually translated 'thanksgiving'), Lord's Supper, Holy Communion or Mass. Almost all Christians celebrate it (though the Quakers, for instance, do not) but its meaning for different denominations has varied considerably. The difficulty and delicacy of recent attempts to find common ground indicate both the importance of the Eucharist and its complexity, the richness of ideas which it contains.

The earliest written reference to the Lord's Supper comes from St Paul in c 55 AD: 'the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it, and said: "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (I Corinthians, chapter 11).

The ceremony was evidently already important to Christians, who were following the instructions of Jesus at the Last Supper, the final meal which he ate with his disciples at Passover and which is described, with variations, in three of the gospels (Matthew, chapter 26; Mark, chapter 14; Luke, chapter 22). The Jewish Passover meal celebrated the liberation of God's people from bondage in Egypt. The Christian service celebrated the new 'covenant' or agreement between man and God, established through Christ, and the liberation from the bondage of sin and death made possible by Christ's death and resurrection.

The Eucharist was at first part of the *agape* or 'love feast', the meal which the Christians ate together, presumably as a way of keeping in close touch with each other, as a continuation of Christ's meals with his disciples, and as a mark of their faith, to 'proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.' But at an early stage the Eucharist became a separate ceremony.

A ritual meal is an important element of religions other than Christianity (and in the ancient world formal covenants were often ratified by a sacrifice and a meal). Bitterly contested attempts have been made to show that the Christians borrowed their communion meal from the mystery cults of the Roman world but what is more likely is that similar ideas flourished in a similar climate. Nor is it any discredit to Christianity if other faiths have shared some of its most powerful ideas and emotions (see also FOOD AND DRINK; MYSTERY RELIGIONS).

Bread of Life

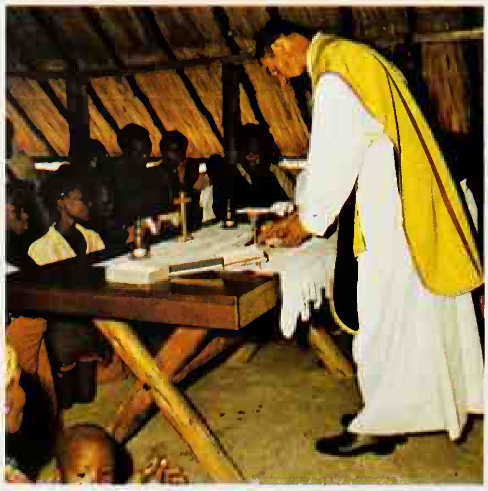
References to the Eucharist in early Christian writers are remarkably rare, presumably because of reluctance to unveil a central mystery of the faith to unbelievers. By at least the 2nd century, those who had not been baptized or who were otherwise regarded as unfit to share the communion were excluded from it. This secrecy prompted accusations of cannibalism from pagans who had heard that the Christians feasted on someone's body and blood.

That there was a mystery, that the eating of bread and drinking of wine were not performed simply 'in remembrance', is clear from St Paul. 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation (or communion) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation (or communion) in the body of Christ?' (I Corinthians 10.16). And St John's gospel (chapter 6) quotes Jesus as saying: 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst . . . He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats of me will live because of me.'

The precise nature of the mystery, however, is in dispute. Most Christians would agree that Christ is in some way present in the Communion, that the ceremony is a channel of God's grace to the believer (the word Eucharist contains the Greek *charis*, 'grace'), and that through it the communicant gains at least a sense of closeness to Christ and to other Christians. Beyond this, the Communion may be thought of as primarily a commemoration of the Last Supper, or as a re-enactment of it, in which Christ is present with 'the two or three who are gathered together', as he was originally present with his disciples. Similarly, it may be seen as a commemoration of the sacrifice on the Cross, the breaking of Christ's body and outpouring of his blood which atoned for human sin, or as a re-enactment of it, a fresh offering of that sacrifice to God. The consumption of the elements (the bread and wine) may be regarded as symbolic, or as a spiritual feeding upon the Saviour, or as a physical consumption of the body and blood through which the communicant becomes one with Christ. And again, the sacrament may be the 'bread of life' or 'medicine of immortality' in a symbolic, a spiritual or a literal and physical sense.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation was officially adopted by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The words and actions of Christ at the Last Supper, repeated by the priest assuming the person of Christ, change the 'substance' (the underlying reality) of the elements into Christ's body and blood, though the outward appearance (the 'species' or 'accidents') of the bread and wine remains unaltered. Many Protestants have denied this doctrine, often interpreting the 'real presence' of Christ in the sacrament in a spiritual or symbolic sense, and many have distrusted what they regard as superstitious adoration of the consecrated elements, including the practice of reserving the sacrament – placing the consecrated elements on the altar to be adored by the faithful. Protestants have also quarrelled with the Roman Catholic doctrine that in the Mass the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is re-presented to God.

The Mass, Holy Communion or Lord's Supper is the most important ceremony of almost all Christian denominations



G. Cubitt

Broadly speaking, the Eastern Churches have interpreted the Eucharist in basically the same way as the Roman Catholic Church, though their forms of service differ from the Mass in various ways. Most Protestant Communion services are based on the Mass, though with important differences.

Not surprisingly, the Mass came to be regarded as a powerful magical ceremony. Already in the 2nd century, St Irenaeus accused the Gnostic teacher Marcus of perverting the Eucharist to the worship of a female divinity called Charis (Grace), pretending to turn cups of wine into her blood so that those who drank believed that Charis flowed into them. In 694 the Council of Toledo condemned the practice of saying Mass for the dead in the name of a living man, with the intention of striking him dead (see also BLACK MASS).

From the early Middle Ages, the sacramental bread was made in the form of flat unleavened wafers called 'hosts' (from Latin *hostia*, 'victim') and the consecrated host, as the body of Christ and so the container of divine power, was thought to be a powerful weapon of sorcery. Witches were accused of stealing consecrated hosts for magical and Satanic purposes, and in fact all through Christian history churches have been troubled by thefts of hosts.

An important element of belief in the magical efficacy of the Mass was the fact that the Church itself put the ceremony to many uses. Masses were said for the souls of the dead, for the sick, for rain, for good weather, for the protection of travellers, over cattle or farm tools or fishing boats to bless them and bring a good yield. The doctrine that a priest could say Mass effectively even if he was in a state of sin (because he said it in the person of Christ, not in his own person) heightened the impression of the Mass as a ceremony containing magical power regardless of the motives and purposes for which it was used.

(See also SACRAMENTS.)

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MASTERS

THE MASTERS of occult belief are adepts vho have achieved the summit of perfection ut who have chosen to remain on earth, sually unknown to the majority of mankind ut guiding humanity in wisdom by inspiring ifted individuals. They include the founders f the great religions and they have a ariety of honorific titles – Mahatmas, the Hierarchy, the Great Ones, the Secret Brotherhood, the Inner Government of the Vorld, the Great White Lodge of Masters f the Wisdom.

'Although they have physical bodies (as a ort of fulcrum for exertion of energy),' nna Kennedy Winner explains, 'most of he work of the Masters is said to be done t mental levels, sometimes while they are wake, but often also with their bodies in eep repose or trance. (This habit, combined with purity of life, enables them to se the same physical body for a longer than verage number of years.) At any moment, Master can focus his consciousness upon ny spot of the globe, and enter into the nner consciousness of any living being, if e so desires. He can read the thoughts of ny man, and if that man be sufficiently ensitive to impressions from his own igher self, the Master can impress certain deas upon him. It is in this way that the reat leaders of mankind . . . receive so-alled "inspiration".'

H. P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant were oth inspired by the Secret Brothers who ved in the Himalayas and Tibet (see ESANT; BLAVATSKY), and one of them, Master Koot Hoomi, inspired Alice Bailey, he celebrated occult author. Many of her ooks were dictated to her by another Master, Djwal Khul, and when he was ismissed as a figment of her imagination, he replied that he was the only imaginary erson she knew who sent her parcels from ndia. She sometimes went to the annual neetings of the Masters in May, in a valley f the Himalayas, where Christ and Buddha resided and disciples came from all over he world – some in their physical bodies, ome while their physical bodies were lsewhere.

The idea of the deathless adept and nspirer is not confined to the Eastern radition, with its Mahatmas, Bodhisattvas nd reincarnated Lamas (see BUDDHISM; AMAS; MAHATMAS), nor are all the Masters believed to live in the Himalayas. The Hungarian Master, who lives in Europe, was the famous Count of t-Germain in the 18th century and had arlier been Sir Francis Bacon, and earlier till the philosopher Proclus (see ST-GERMAIN). The Master once known as esus is said to live in the Lebanon, and the Spiritualist movement is watched over by Master of Crete who was formerly St Paul.

It is an old belief in the West that the reat sage conquers death: Pythagoras and Apollonius of Tyana are examples. The alchemists sought the Philosophers' Stone which was also the Elixir of Life, supreme wisdom, perfection and immortality, and some of them were believed to have achieved it. The body of Christian Rosenkreutz, the legendary founder of the Rosicrucians, was said to have been found uncorrupted a hundred years after his 'death'. He had been initiated by certain Wise Men during a visit to the East, and in the 17th century the belief that there existed a secret group of adepts, the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, created great excitement. The tradition grew up that an occult Order should receive its ultimate inspiration from 'unknown superiors'. The Martinists believed in hidden chiefs of this sort. In England the visible head of the Order of the Golden Dawn was MacGregor Mathers but he claimed to receive his authority from Hidden and Secret Chiefs, who dictated part of the Order's rituals. He met them on occasion, and said that they were 'human and living upon this earth; but possessing terrible superhuman powers' (see GOLDEN DAWN). The great superhuman inspirers of more recent groups, including the Aetherius Society and Mankind United (see FLYING SAUCERS; MANKIND UNITED), fall into the same general category.

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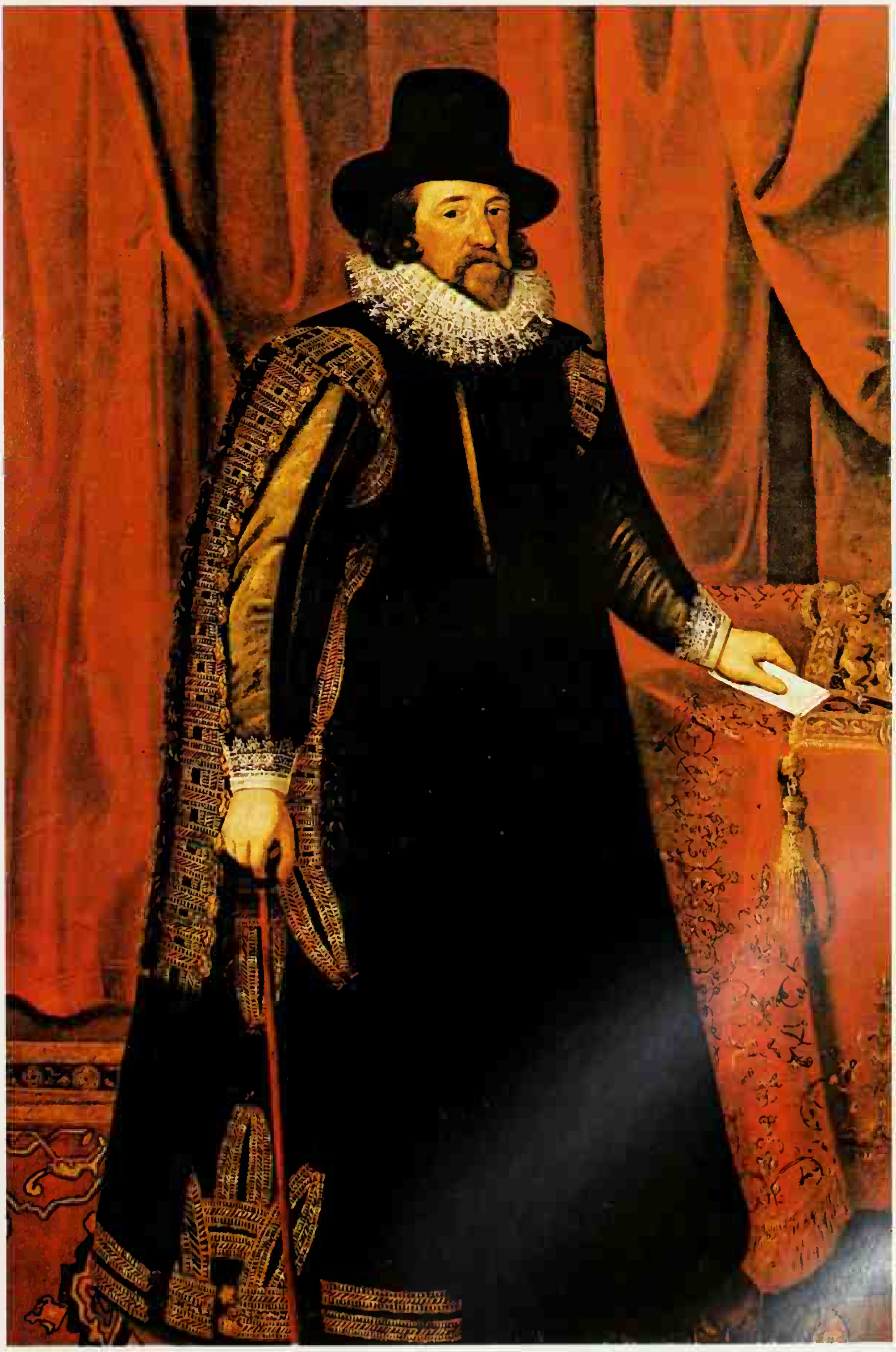


National Portrait Gallery

Sir Francis Bacon, the 17th century philosopher, olitician and lawyer, is regarded by many ccultists as one of the Masters, the great depts who secretly guide humanity

Mathers, S. L.

Head of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the 1890s, editor of magical texts and for a time the mentor of Aleister Crowley; born Samuel Liddell Mathers, he called himself MacGregor Mathers and adopted the title of Comte de Glenstrae; in the Golden Dawn he claimed that his authority came from certain 'Hidden and Secret Chiefs' but other members resented his autocratic pretensions and deposed him.

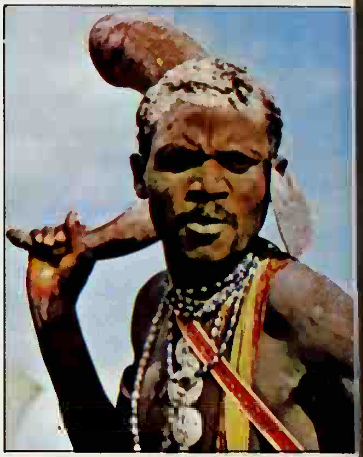
See CROWLEY; GOLDEN DAWN.

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

Mau Mau

Secret nationalist and terrorist society among the Kikuyu in Kenya, led by prophets in its early days; blood-curdling oaths, based on traditional Kikuyu practice, were administered to members to ensure total loyalty to the society; after much bloodshed, Mau Mau was suppressed in the late 1950s.

See KIKUYU.



Living in an orderly, predetermined universe, the Maya believed that all events were tied to a rhythm of fate and must recur, whenever the calendrical factors were the same

MAYA

AMERICAN INDIANS speaking variants of the Maya family of languages form a substantial proportion of the population of southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. Long before the arrival of white men, their ancestors created one of the most advanced of all Pre-Colombian civilizations, with magnificent achievements in astronomy, mathematics, architecture and art, but little is known about the Maya before the early centuries AD, when they first began to build in stone.

In all probability the Maya had settled in their homeland as groups of small farmers, cultivating maize, peppers, manioc, pumpkins, vanilla, cocoa and cochineal. They collected rubber in the forests, hunted jaguars, peccaries (wild pig) and alligators. Their domestic animals were dogs, pigs and turkeys. A thousand years earlier, about 900 BC, their neighbours, the Olmecs, had erected stone monuments and used a form of writing. Then suddenly, in the 2nd century AD, the Maya set out on the adventure of civilization.

The 'classic' period of Maya culture is dated from roughly 250 to 900 AD. At its peak more than 40 Mayan cities contained imposing temples, pyramids and palaces, with populations ranging from 5,000 up to 50,000. They included Tikal, Palenque, Copan and many more. A powerful tradition of sculpture developed. Figures of the gods were made in stone and finely carved stelae recorded dates in a complex astronomical calendar. Sacred courtyards were surrounded by stone pyramids, on whose flat tops fine houses were erected for the gods. These holy places of the Maya were not only carved, but painted in brilliant colours.

The Maya cities were independent city-states, each dominating the area around it and serving as a political, economic and religious centre for the people of the surrounding villages and farms. The cities produced great artists, and mathematicians and astronomers of formidable skill. The Maya made beautiful woven cloth, and dressed sumptuously in garments and headdresses which indicated many grades of social rank. They made a kind of paper out of the bark of fig-trees, on which they painted books inscribed in a syllabic script which included some 650 symbols. They worked copper and gold, but Maya culture was suppported by a simple, Stone Age agriculture, carried to the limits of efficiency.

The civilization was based on religion. The high priest of a city ranked equally with the *Halach Uinic* (ruler of men), who in his turn had been previously educated as an adept in religious magic. They worshipped a Creator who lived beyond the sky and who was both male and female. There was Mother Earth, usually depicted as a gigantic monster – alligator, toad and turtle combined – who swam around in the waters of the reedy marsh of Creation. Above her was the sky, with a layer for each of the planets, and spheres of movement for the sun and moon. Below her were the underworlds where the heavenly bodies passed when out of sight. All around her were the spirits of rain and thunder. She was attended by the deities of the food plants and animals. To the Maya all Nature was alive, constantly dying and being born.

The Five Temples

In general the Maya gods are rather colourless – we have little detailed information on their functions. The Spanish chronicler Lizana tells us that the city of Izamal in northern Yucatan possessed five temple pyramids, dedicated severally to the sun god, the rain god, the war god, and two separate manifestations of Itzamna. In the south temple Itzamna was honoured as a wise king of primeval times who had invented writing and who was consulted as an oracle; the west temple, where he was venerated as the healer of the sick and the waker of the dead, was a place of pilgrimage. The sun god in the north temple was called Kinich Kak Mo ('sunface fire macaw') because he was visualized in the shape of a macaw swooping down out of the heavens at noon to kindle the sacrificial flame. This is also the probable interpretation of the image of a descending winged being found in the temples of Tulum. The east temple was dedicated to Chac in his capacity as god of lightning and patron of the priests who lived in the temple itself. The temple of the war god Hun Pic Tok, who was named after the 'eight thousand stone knives' which formed the points of the spears of his countless warriors, lay in the middle of the town and was 'the most important of all'.

Walter Krickeberg and others
Pre- Columbian American Religions

Poetry of Numbers

It was an orderly, fatalistic universe. The movements of the heavenly bodies in their regular courses prognosticated the movements of fate. Each day had its fortune, each period of 20 days had an overriding influence. Each year had its agricultural magics. However, when counting long periods of time the Maya used a period they called a *tun* of 360 days. They multiplied the tun by powers of 20 (to 20 tuns, 400, 8000, 160,000 tuns and so on) in order to deal with astronomical calculations which in some way reflected the history of the gods both past and future. When they had to put these long calculations into practical terms of the agricultural year they had to use elaborate 'distance numbers' to find the exact day and season that they were writing about. Venturing into this complicated field it soon becomes clear that the Maya loved numbers and could express ideas through them almost as if they were making computerized poetry. They proved their accuracy by predicting eclipses and transits of Venus, and running a moon calendar.

Within such a framework of conditioned time, people find themselves in need of information from soothsayers. These specialists in times and numbers gave information of lucky days for any event, divined the causes of misfortunes, and acted as advisers in family affairs. The soothsayers used magic books painted with figures and dates like pictorial almanacs for their work. It was something like casting a horoscope, since one's fate on any day varied according to the correspondences between that day and the day of one's birth.

A Maya priest, holding his ceremonial staff, stands over a man who is mutilating his own tongue by passing through it a cord set with thorns: stone relief of the early 8th century AD. The Mayans also offered human sacrifices to their gods, especially to the rain gods in an annual ceremony

Abandoned Cities

At its zenith in this period the total Maya population may have reached a figure of about 2 million, the majority of them living in present-day Guatemala. Their advanced civilization gave them a strong intellectual and religious influence on surrounding areas, however. In the 1970s murals in the Maya style were discovered – originally by looters – in a palace complex of the 8th and 9th centuries AD at Cacaxtla in central Mexico. Maya dignitaries are shown solemnly enthroned and there are figures dressed as jaguars and eagles, and a vivid painting of a fierce battle between jaguar and eagle warriors.

This first 'classic' phase of the Maya high civilization broke up suddenly and catastrophically at the end of the 9th century, for reasons which are still unclear. Perhaps there was a disastrous civil war, or perhaps a climatic change led to the rapid spread of the forests, or perhaps a prophecy was followed and the people abandoned their homes at some preset date. Whatever the reason, the great cities and religious centres were left empty and were quickly swallowed up by the engulfing jungle, where they greeted the eyes of fascinated explorers centuries afterwards, looming up enigmatically among the tangled vegetation. There is little sign of physical damage to the lost cities and in some of them poor hovels of rough stone walling were still being built a generation after the abandonment, but Maya culture in the region never recovered.

The smaller Maya towns in the almost waterless limestone peninsula of Yucatan survived, and in the late 10th century, when underground streams were fully exploited, the Yucatec Maya achieved a new importance. They were greatly influenced by an invasion of Toltec nobles from central Mexico at the end of the century. These refugees from the terrible war which had destroyed their old capital at Tula in Hidalgo settled down to build a new and even more glorious city in the Maya lands with the help of the local craftsmen. Although their city of Chichen Itza was very Mexican in style they quite soon abandoned their simpler picture writing for the more useful Maya system. Eventually the Toltec chieftains were involved in civil wars and the city was destroyed about 1200 AD. A new centre was founded at Mayapan, though it was far less magnificent than Chichen Itza.

The Maya cities continued on their way, developing in size and power. Unlike the older phase of Maya culture, these Yucatec cities placed the palace of the civil ruler in a position of equal importance to the temples of the gods. Each city was an independent state often at war with its neighbours, but they all gave respect if not obedience to the chief who ruled at Uxmal, the *Tutul Xiuh*. They preserved the old calendar in part, but were unable or unwilling to use the ancient counts covering vast distances of time. They reckoned in a series of periods known as *Katuns*, each a little less than 20 years, which were numbered from zero to 12. These 13 Katuns, their longest time-cycle, covered about 260 years, which was sufficient for most practical purposes.

Apart from the architecture of their temples and palaces the later Maya were not very successful as artists; they were more historically minded than their ancestors, however, and each of the main cities held a Book of Chilam Balam (the Book of the Jaguar Priest). This gave very short accounts of the major events which occurred in each Katun of their time count, and projected the events into the future. The Maya still believed that all events were tied to a rhythm of fate and must recur whenever the calendrical factors were the same.

While we have no historical record from the more ancient Maya cities, the books tell a little about the political struggles between Maya cities, of the development of Mayapan and the fall of Chichen Itza. This event was due to the oppression exercised by a tricky individual named Hunnac Ceel, who concealed himself inside the sacred 'well' at Chichen Itza and then pretended to have received information from the rain gods. He used it to gain power; but later he was overthrown and the city declined.

Smoke Signal to the God

The Maya offered human sacrifices, and the offering of victims to the rain gods was an annual ceremony at Chichen Itza. In the present century two expeditions have searched the great 'well' in the limestone rock. They have recovered bones of the victims together with a great treasure of gold, jade, images of rubber and carvings in bone which had been cast into the well each year, as an entreaty for the spring rains which would make the vital maize crop prosper. However, although the Maya offered human sacrifices on occasions other than the spring ceremony, they more frequently offered animals and plants to their gods.

Most of the Yucatec temples were decorated with complex representations of Chac, the Lord of the Rains. His mask is easily recognizable with its projecting curled snout. He is often shown carrying his thunder-axe in the paintings on the books. A popular method of calling his attention was to burn 'Pom' incense, balls of raw rubber. The thick smoke rose up like storm clouds, and the god was supposed to see the signal and send his messengers with magical jars of water which they poured through the storm clouds.

Carved shell depicting a Maya priest: the Maya survive in large numbers in Central America and their ancient gods have been absorbed into the modern world as kindhearted saints

Museum of the American Indian

People enjoyed the religious festivals, which occurred once every 20 days. They came to witness the ceremonies which were mostly dramatic representations of the legends of the gods. It was all very glorious to watch the masked priests dancing in the feathered garments, to sing the chants, and to be present at the sacrificial ceremonies. Of course some of the occasions of human sacrifice were both fearful and exciting and there were those mysterious moments when the ordinary people were not allowed to witness what the priests were doing in the dark houses on top of the temple platforms. There was an air of gaiety at festivals; people wore their best clothes and often enough they became drunk with great quantities of fermented honey.

For most of this century the ancient Maya were thought of as a fundamentally peaceable people, with an elite of priestly astronomers and mathematicians occupied in dispassionate intellectual pursuits. By the 1980s, however, the decipherment of most of the surviving Maya documents had revealed the warlike and bloodthirsty side of Maya culture. Boys were taken from their families at an early age to be trained as fighting men. The city states waged war on each other, and took captives who were tortured before being killed as sacrifices to the gods. The Maya gods, like those of the Aztecs (see AZTECS), required human blood for their sustenance and the torture and sacrifice of human beings was an essential element of Maya religion, intended to appease the gods, promote fertility and preserve the order and harmony of the world. Blood was spilled to satisfy the gods in the self-mutilation which the Maya diligently practised, using needles to draw blood from the ears and cheeks, the tongue, lips and penis.

Conquest of an Empty City

The arrival of Spanish ships in the beginning of the 16th century hardly disturbed the Maya cities. Some traded, some fought and were defeated; but the Spaniards passed on to the conquest of Mexico. After this the Maya chiefs must have waited in some trepidation. It was not until 1526 that the de Montejos, father and son, made two successive assaults on the Maya cities. The Yucatan peninsula was not easily conquered, but in 1537 the Tutul Xiuh surrendered and the Spaniards became the new rulers of Yucatan. However, there was still a Maya stronghold in the town of Peten Itza on the shores of Lake Tayasal, founded by the refugees from Chichen Itza. Here in the ancient homeland of the Maya they remained undisturbed for over a century.

Eventually in the 17th century occasional parties of Spanish soldiers, sent on exploring missions, and sometimes small groups of missionary friars, came into contact with this last independent Maya city. Sometimes they were welcomed, sometimes they were killed. Finally the Governor of Yucatan decided that there must be an expedition to subdue the last Maya town. At first he was received with courtesy, but a later visit was met with a show of violent hostility. Apparently the Itza people were determined to hold out because of a magic prophecy in one of the Books of Chilan Balam. In 1702 the Spanish set out to destroy the city. They came around the side of the lake on foot, with some sailing boats armed with cannon on the lake itself. Suddenly a fleet of canoes set out from Peten Itza, passing through the Spanish lines peacefully so that few shots were fired; the Itza landed and vanished into the jungles. Unknown to the Spaniards this was the first day of a new Katun in which it was prophesied that misfortunes should once more lead the Itza to abandon their homes. When the Spanish army came to the city there was no one left. Fires still warmed cooking pots, cloth was abandoned on the looms, but not a human being had stayed behind. It took the Spaniards a whole day to break the idols in the houses and temples.

The Maya today are peasant farmers in Mexico, Guatemala and other Central American countries. In religion they are Roman Catholics, though their Christianity retains powerful strains of their old beliefs. One of the factors which helped the spread of Christianity was that the principal Christian emblem, the cross, was already venerated by the Maya as a religious symbol. Many of their ancient deities have become identified with Christian figures and saints, and though the Maya worship the God of Christianity in church, they continue to honour their own deities at home. (See also MEXICO.)

C.A. BURLAND*

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MAY DAY

THE GREAT FESTIVAL OF REBIRTH and renewal, May Day, the first day of May, was an occasion of great joy in the past among the common people of Europe. As a ceremonial day it was superimposed upon the ancient festival of Beltane, the inauguration of the second half of the Celtic year. But in the form in which it was observed by our forefathers it was a dramatized presentation of the union of spring and summer.

Very early on May morning, in the past, the young people of the community would rise from their beds and make their way to the woods. Here they would gather garlands of flowers with branches from the trees and, it is said, indulge in 'wanton dalliances'. As a symbol of rebirth, the greenery would be brought back to the villages and used as decoration for the doors and windows of the houses. This ancient rite of 'bringing home the May' was in effect a method of ritually conveying the fertilizing powers of awakened Nature into the human community.

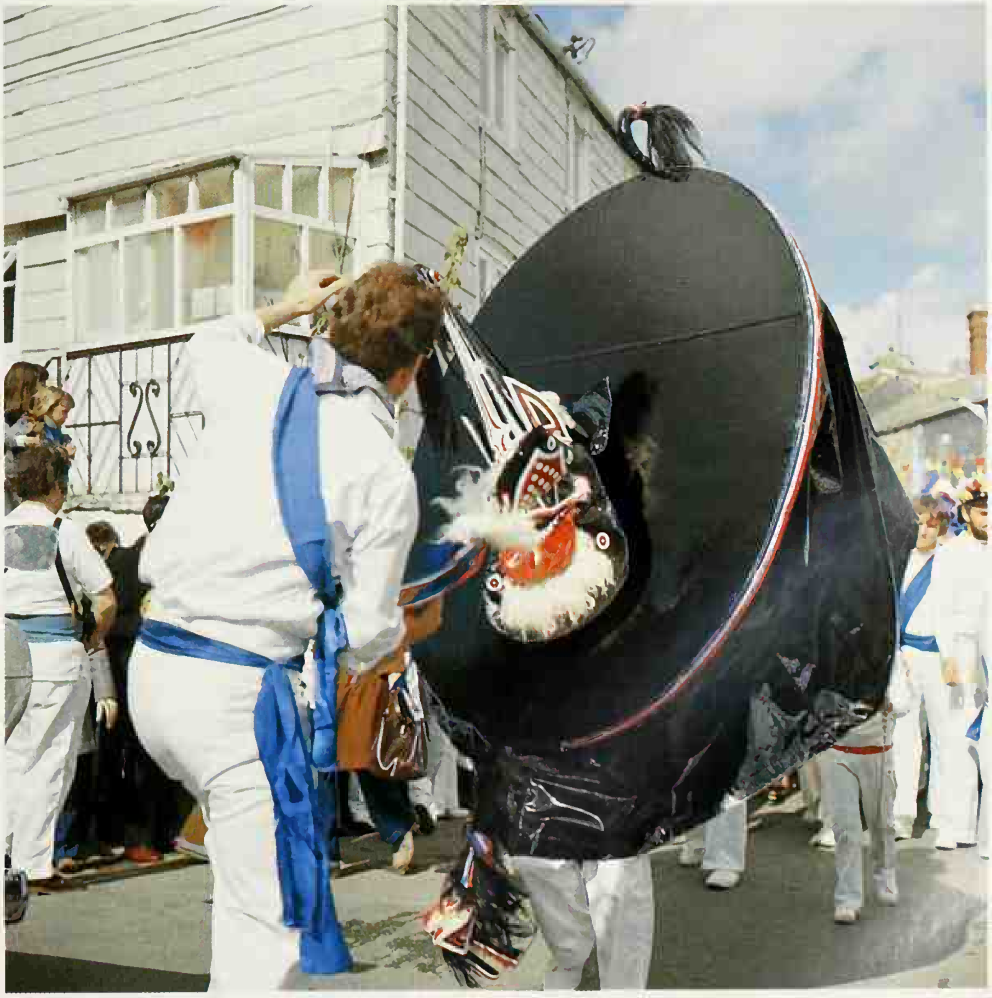
The central figure of the celebration was the maypole or May tree; in England this was the white hawthorn, which possessed supernatural powers and symbolized the transition from spring to summer, while in America it was the evergreen arbutus. Like so many other magical objects the hawthorn was dualistic in character, being a force both for good and evil. As long ago as the 12th century its sinister aspect was recorded in Ireland, and in England the once beneficent May has become a flower of evil that must never be brought into the home (see HAWTHORN).

The election of a Queen of the May, one of the great May Day ceremonies, had no doubt some connection with the ancient Scandinavian custom in which a mock contest was staged between two individuals, the one representing summer and the other winter, from which the former always emerged the victor. This ceremony, which continued in the Isle of Man until early in the 19th century, was described in the *Universal Magazine* in 1786 as a ritual contest between the Queen of Winter (a man dressed in woman's clothes) and a female Queen of the May. The same basic idea was also represented in the better-known ritual marriage between the May bridegroom and the May bride, which has been supposed to symbolize the union of spring and vegetation. A King of the May was also elected in former times, but the crowning of the May Queen remains integral to the surviving rite in the British Isles. This is accompanied by merrymaking and ceremonial dancing around the decorated tree or maypole.

On May Day it was once the custom for groups of young people to visit all the houses in the village bearing garlands of flowers and soliciting donations, in return for which they received the 'blessing of May' to bring them good luck for the coming year.

All the characters in the May Day rites embodied the power to endow crops and women with fertility and good luck. The maypole or May bush, originally a tree brought in from the woods, was only in later times set up as a permanent fixture on the village green. The famous maypole in London's Strand, which was 134 feet tall, was later transferred to Wanstead in Essex, where it was used to support the largest telescope then known.

One feature of the English ceremony was the dance of the Morris men, the main characters being Robin Hood, Maid Marion, Will



Among the May Day celebrations at Padstow, in Cornwall, the hobby horse pursues and catches girls and women under his black tarpaulin body, a powerful fertility ritual

Janet & Colin Bord

Scarlet, Little John, the Fool in cap and bells, Tom the Piper, and the hobbyhorse, all symbolical of primitive ceremonial magic. The hobby-horses still play a prominent role in the May Day ceremonies at Padstow and Minehead in the West Country, where they attract visitors from all over the world, but the other characters in the play have long since made their exit (see HOBBY-HORSE).

It was perhaps inevitable that the Puritans should have taken deep offence at the May Day ceremonies, detecting in the maypole obvious fertility connotations and also a close affinity with the Roman games dedicated to the goddess Flora, which were held on 28 April. To the English and American Puritan the sight of rustics capering about an upright pole was all too reminiscent of pagan worship.

The Puritans' hostility to the superstitions of May Day apparently did not extend to the prohibition of washing the face in May dew, the traditional recipe for a good complexion as well as for health and strength; presumably they were unaware of the custom in some parts of Europe for young girls to roll stark naked in the magical dew on May morning. It is on record that even the great Oliver Cromwell himself was not above making use of May dew on medical advice.

Inevitably the May Day celebrations, like many Christmas customs, were suppressed during Puritan rule, to re-emerge at the Restoration. Later they became part of that gradual decline to which all the elements of 'Merry England' were now subject. The May Day rites continued throughout the 18th century and into the 19th, with May games on the village green, and dancing chimney sweeps and garlanded milkmaids a common sight in the London streets. As the drab century of industrialism drew to its end May Day underwent temporary metamorphosis as the festival of international labour, the hobby-horse and Morris men being replaced by processions of trade unionists marching behind banners. Today remnants of traditional May Day celebrations survive only in rural areas.

MAZE

Janet & Colin Bord

THE SYMBOL OF THE MAZE or labyrinth is one of the oldest known to man; yet despite its appearance in widely differing places it is a symbol that has finally kept its secret. It occurs in two forms, both originally of magical significance, and both familiar today as an art convention; the 'spiral', with one uninterrupted path sweeping in to the centre; and the Greek 'meander' pattern, which is simply a rectilinear spiral cluttered with false turns, dead ends and multiple ways – the labyrinth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Both designs became popular in the eastern Mediterranean area when a pharaoh of the 12th Dynasty built a sprawling temple in Egypt, and a Cretan prince a similarly labyrinthine palace at Cnossus.

Few things can be stated with certainty about the labyrinth. That it was a ritual centre of paramount importance is not in doubt. That it was a place where a living king-god renewed his virility, where he 'died' and was 'resurrected' for the welfare of his people, is usually accepted. That as a symbol it linked the world with the afterworld, life with death, and death with resurrection is hardly questioned, any more than the fact that from its origin it was associated with the gods of the dead and the underworld. In Egypt, which most authorities see as the main source and cradle of the labyrinth, the god Osiris (see OSIRIS) was murdered and resurrected before he abandoned this world to become supreme god of the dead.

The labyrinth was a vital and bewildering compound of place, drama and dance, combined with the elements of sacred marriage, ritual death and ritual resurrection. In Egypt it was a complex of tomb and temple. The pharaohs of Egypt were king-gods, who ruled, lived, died and were buried as gods. On the well-being of the pharaoh's sacred person, alive or dead, depended the welfare of the nation. To secure this, a mortuary temple was attached to every pyramid or royal tomb, which was served by priests whose duty it was to ensure that all things were done to guarantee the dead pharaoh perpetual felicity.

The Egyptian temple was not only a religious centre, but an administrative one as well: a place of ritual, council and assembly, transcendentally and bureaucratically responsible for the welfare of the nation. Temple and tomb then, though not physically attached, were adjacent and this proximity is a key factor in the confused matter of the labyrinth. The internal plan of the pyramid was complex and it is presumed that the labyrinthine complexity of the tomb became attached, through proximity, to the temple, which in time was known by the name of labyrinth.

Some scholars consider that ritual rather than practical reasons account for the interior complexity of the pyramids, believing it to spring from the need to conceal the sacred body of the king-god from the malice of the powers of evil, rather than to preserve his treasure from tomb-robbers.

Plan of the Infernal Court

Coins, mortuary seals and plaques, scattered from beyond the Tigris to the Mediterranean, bear witness to the labyrinth in all its moods: from Sumerian seals featuring the killing of the king-god to others representing the sacred marriage. Frequently the labyrinth is shown circling the heads of gods and goddesses, cult objects or animals – an association which endowed it with magical and protective value. Some of the most ancient, and curious, 'documents' concerning the labyrinth relate it to the underworld: tablets of Babylonian provenance, which are the presumed archives of priests and augurs famous for their practice of divination by the entrails of animals. Engraved with drawings of intestines accompanied by a series of spirals, the tablets are inscribed 'the Palace of the Intestines': in other words, the infernal regions deep in the bowels of the earth beyond the abyss. For the Babylonian augurs the underworld was reflected in the intestines, as heaven was in the liver, and the labyrinthine spiral was its symbol.

The great Egyptian labyrinth mentioned by Herodotus and other classical writers stood in the Fayyum; it was the vast tomb, mortuary temple and administrative centre of Amenemhet III (c 1850-1800 BC). According to Pliny, 'It was divided into districts and prefectures called nomes... It contained moreover temples to all the gods of Egypt... Some of the temples are so devised that those who approach the doors are greeted by terrific thunders from within...' Speaking again of Amenemhet's funerary complex, Pliny observes: 'There is no doubt that Daedalus took from this the pattern of his labyrinth, which he made in Crete. Although he copied only the hundredth part of it, since it contained... many entrances designed to produce misleading goings and comings . . .'

The story of the building of the Cretan labyrinth by King Minos to conceal the Minotaur, who was eventually slain by Theseus, is one of the most ancient of Greek legends (see BULL; THESEUS). It contains many 'labyrinthine' elements: a bull cult; a king-god slain in the form of a bull; sacred marriage and fertility rites; and another wholly typical labyrinthine characteristic – Ariadne's thread which enabled Theseus to find his way out of the maze.

Excavations revealed no labyrinth at Cnossus, and it is now usually agreed that the word 'labyrinth', in Crete, derives not from the complexity of the palace, but from *labrys* (double-axe), the weapon with which the bulls were slaughtered for the sacrifice (see AXE; CRETE). Indeed R.W. Hutchinson (in *Prehistoric Crete*) suggests that the word 'labyrinth' might never have acquired its modern significance of 'maze' but for the fact that the earliest palace at Cnossus and Amenemhet's funerary temple were more or less contemporary, and so invited comparisons between the two. The Cretan palace was destroyed round about 1400 BC, but the Egyptian labyrinth survived until Roman times, and it is perfectly possible, as Hutchinson points out, that its maze-like intricacies 'confirmed and crystallized' the enduring folklore memories about the

Minotaur and the maze-like building he lived in.

Dance of Ariadne's Thread

No activity has proved more faithfully representative of the labyrinth and its ritual content than the dance associated with it (see DANCE). As a dance it has survived in many places, with nothing more substantial to express it than a slender cord held in the hands of the dancers – a cord which some identify with Ariadne's thread. Often, the labyrinth is symbolized by a spiral drawing on the ground – a magic hierogram – along which the dancers wind inward, left to centre in the direction of death, and out again right in the direction of life. Cord and drawing alike link the world with the afterworld, life with death, and death with resurrection. The dance indeed expressed the concept of the labyrinth in all its ritual aspects: circling dances of lamentation, protective dances and vigorous fertility dances, all held to be magically effective, and the circling ones the most potent of all because of their protective value.

The city of Troy had a close relationship with the labyrinth, for it was consecrated to Hippolytus, son of Theseus, according to Pausanias. To this day Troy's name is associated with those enigmatic stone circles and maze-like earthworks strewn across Europe and far north into Iceland, which have been called 'Neolithic labyrinths'. Their origin and purpose remains hotly debated but frequently they are assumed to have been places of ritual practice and assembly. Debatable too is the question of how the name of Troy came to be attached to many of them – Walls of Troy; Troy Towns; Trogin; Trogenburg. It may have been brought by traders, or on the other hand it may have no connection with the city at all. One suggestion is that the name is derived from the root *truare*, a circular movement around a stable object.

Whatever the original meaning of the symbol of the labyrinth, it was sufficiently popular for the Church to Christianize it. Cryptic mosaics in the naves of medieval churches bear witness to the fact. In place of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land penitents used to make bruising progress on their knees along the swirling paths to gain indulgences by reaching the 'Supreme Centre' or the 'Heavenly Jerusalem' as it was sometimes called. The presence of a labyrinth in a church frequently coincides with the presence of megaliths outside it, they too often traced with spirals (see MEGALITHIC MYSTERIES).

The 'labyrinth' today is a mere 'maze' – a decorative swirl of greenery, with no particular purpose apart from pleasure. The meanings of its multiple ways are forgotten, together with the Crusaders who brought the fashion for mazes back with them from the East. The leisured gentry who reanimated the fashion by furnishing their 17th and 18th century gardens with mazes did so purely for entertainment, to bewilder and astonish their guests: in short, to 'amaze' them – a word whose source some hold to be the maze itself.

JUNE GRIMBLE

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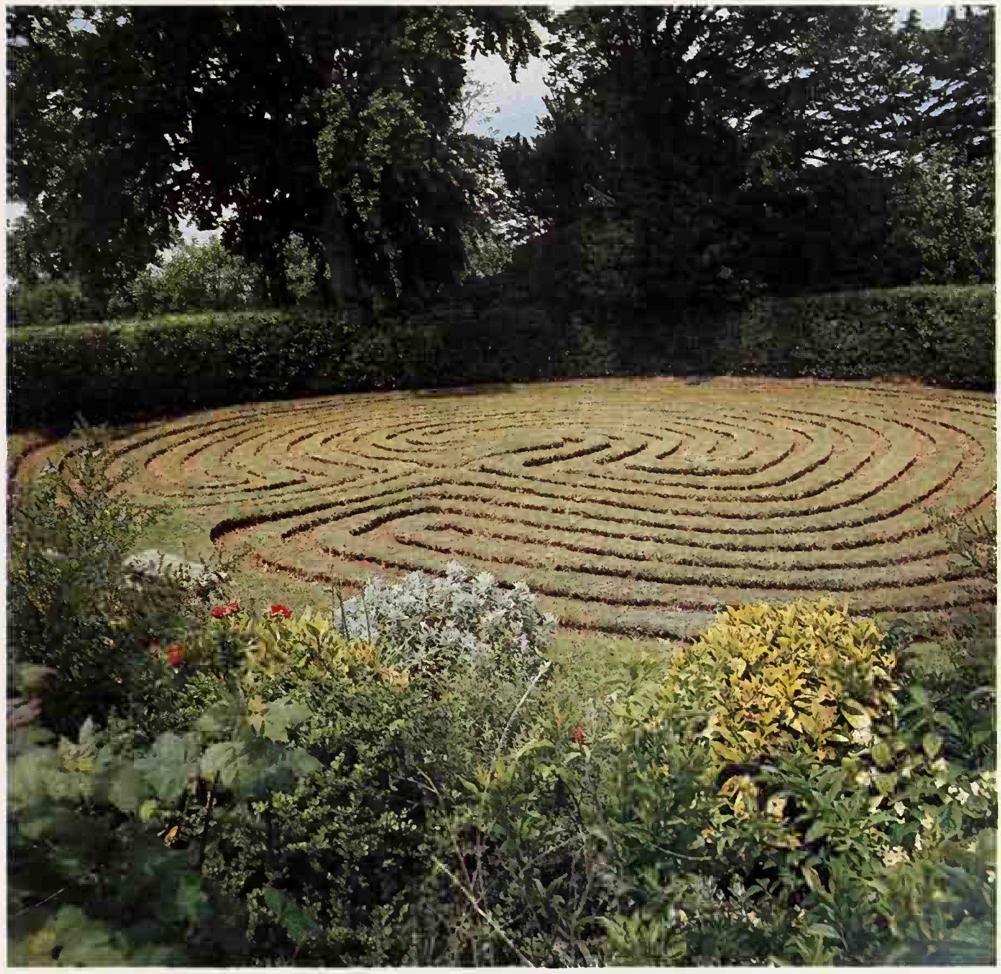


Janet & Colin Bord

Facing page **Labyrinth carved into the rock face in Rocky Valley, near Tintagel in Cornwall**
Right **The name of Troy, or Troy town, has come to be attached to many mazes found all across northern Europe, although there appears to be no connection with the ancient city, and it has been suggested that the name derives from the root *truare*, a circular movement round a stable object: maze cut into the turf at Troy Farm, Somerton, in Oxfordshire**

MECCA AND MEDINA

MECCA IS THE CITY to which all Moslems are bidden, and from which all others are excluded. It was the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammed (570-632 AD) and the Mohammedan era dates from his flight – known as the Hegira – from Mecca to Medina in the year 622 of the Christian era. He lived there for the rest of his life and is buried there. Medina is the second most sacred city of Islam and, like Mecca, is strictly forbidden to non-Moslems.

Mecca was already an important and prosperous place when the Prophet was born. Lying on a major trade route – the 'incense road' – between the East and the Mediterranean, it was frequented by Arab, Christian and Jewish merchants, and had some Christian inhabitants at that time. The town had grown up in a winding valley in the Sarat chain of hills, round the well of Zamzam and the already ancient sanctuary of the Kaaba.

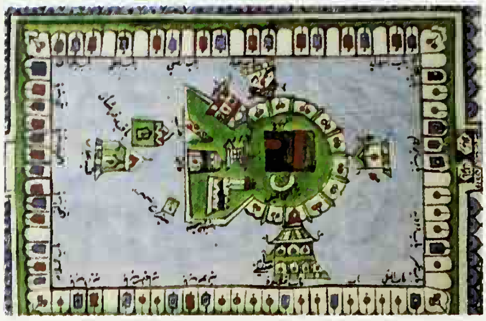
It was the Old Testament patriarch Abraham, according to Moslem tradition, who founded the Kaaba itself on the spot where God ordered him to sacrifice his son Ishmael, the ancestor of the Arab peoples. What is certain is that, like other holy places on earth, it had served more than one cult in succession.

The Sacred House of God is a plain cubic structure, standing about 50ft high and 40ft square, and covered by a vast black cloth, the *kiswa*. Verses from the Koran are embroidered in gold thread on the hem of the kiswa, which is replaced each year at the time of the annual pilgrimage.

The Kaaba was originally a temple and in it, in Mohammed's day, were numerous images of local deities, which he cleared out when he returned in triumph to Mecca in 630. Set in the side of the Kaaba at one of the corners, about 5ft up from ground level, is the famous, immensely ancient and deeply venerated Black Stone. It is oval in shape and is held in a mesh of silver wire to guard it against crumbling. There is a legend that it was given to Adam in Eden by the angel Gabriel and that after the Flood it passed to the descendants of Noah. The Black Stone was set in its present position in the wall of the Kaaba by Mohammed himself, with his own hands, when the building was restored in 605 AD.

The Pilgrimage

There was already an annual pilgrimage to the Kaaba in Mohammed's time, but since no details of the pre-Moslem ceremonies at Mecca are known, it is impossible to say how much of them may have survived in Moslem practice. The *tawaf*, or walking seven times round the Kaaba, was something which the Prophet himself did on his return to Mecca in 630. But the spiritual significance of Mecca as the sacred city of Islam to which all Moslems turn when they pray is, of course, entirely the result of Mohammed's life and preaching.



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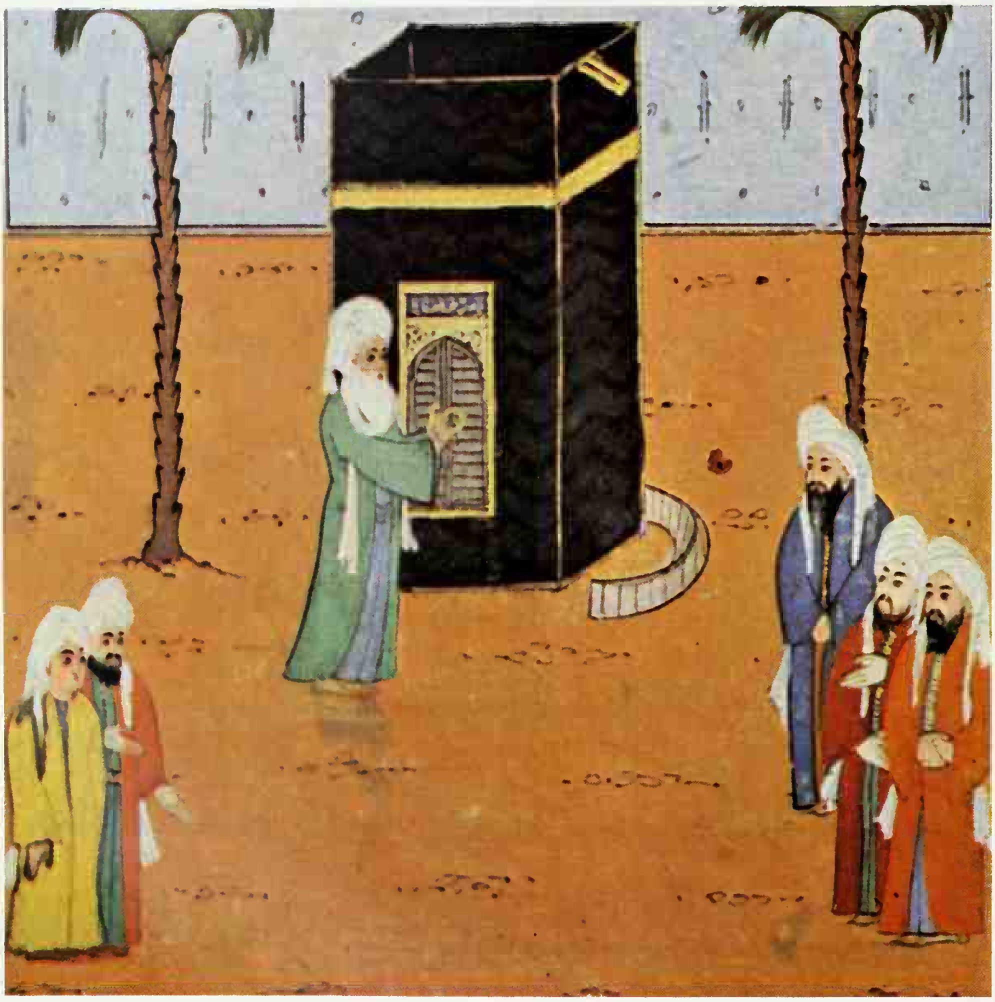
Above Plan of the courtyard interior of the mosque at Mecca, with the shrine of the Kaaba: 17th century Turkish ceramic plaque *Below* Pilgrims around the shrine: miniature in the Topkapi Museum, Istanbul



Sonia Halliday

All Moslems who are not prevented by ill health or financial circumstances are expected to make the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca once in their lifetime. It takes place in the twelfth month of the Moslem lunar calendar. All male pilgrims wear white – the two seamless sheets of the *ihram*, the state of ritual purity – and many women pilgrims wear long white dresses and head coverings. In the state of purity, killing, hunting and all forms of violence are forbidden to the pilgrim, as are scent or jewellery, sexual intercourse and any luxurious gratification of the senses. These prohibitions and the simple white garb of the pilgrims emphasise both the concentration of attention and purpose which is required and the equality of all believers.

On reaching Mecca the pilgrims cry out 'I am here, O Lord, I am here!' Proceeding to the Grand Mosque, they enter the courtyard where the Kaaba stands and circle round it, moving in a clockwise direction, seven times (the tawaf). They try to kiss the Black Stone, or touch it at least, if the press of pilgrims is not too great, and in the past there have been cases of injury and even death in the struggle to get close to it. After the circumnambulation, the pilgrims drink from the water of the Zamzam well, which is only a short distance away, and most of them will take some of the water home with them in bottles, gourds or specially sealed tins.

The Kaaba and the Black Stone are not worshipped. Moslems are told that Mecca is a city of this earth, peopled by human beings; that the Kaaba is made of mountain stone and mortar; that the kiswa is woven and decorated every year afresh by mortal hands; and that the water of Zamzam is simply water. At the same time, the emotion of the occasion is overwhelming. Moslem pilgrims have spoken of the 'ecstatic intoxication' of the moment. Sir Richard Burton (1821-90), the British explorer who was one of the few non-Moslems ever to have made the pilgrimage (he went in disguise), recorded the sensations of excitement and awe which the sight of the Kaaba induced and described how pilgrims clung to it weeping and pressed their beating hearts to the Black Stone.

Other rituals of the pilgrimage include praying at the spot where Abraham stood; running seven times between the hills of as-Safa and al-Mawa, an action which commemorates a frantic search for water by Hagar, Abraham's senior wife and the mother of Ishmael; the *waqfa* or solemn 'standing' before God in repentance in the Plain of Arafat; the stoning of the Devil in the form of three pillars of stone at the place where he appeared to Ishmael; and the final feast at which animals are sacrificed, just as Abraham was permitted to slaughter a ram rather than his son, and symbolizing the pilgrims' readiness to give up to God what is most important to them.

City of the Prophet

Many pilgrims to Mecca go on to visit Medina, which is some 280 miles to the northeast. It was known as Yathrib before the Prophet took up residence there, and it was there that Mohammed established himself as the leader of a distinct monotheistic creed. Medina was the administrative capital of the Islamic Empire until 661, when it was superseded by Damascus, and the Prophet's Mosque, which Mohammed himself helped to build, is there. Pilgrims enter it through the Gate of Salvation and proceed to Mohammed's tomb, reciting a prayer in the space between the tomb and the Prophet's chair, a specially hallowed spot.

The number of Moslems making the pilgrimage to Mecca has risen to between three-quarters of a million and a million in recent years. They come from every corner of the Moslem world and the government of Saudi Arabia has gone to costly lengths to see to their accommodation and care. Vast cities of tents are set up to house them and a special government ministry is solely concerned with organizing the influx every year.

Most of the pilgrims now arrive at Jeddah on the Red Sea coast by air, others come by boat or by road. But the white-robed, barefooted crowds are much the same as they were in Burton's day and their religious fervour and meticulous observance of the traditional rituals has not changed since the days of the Prophet himself.

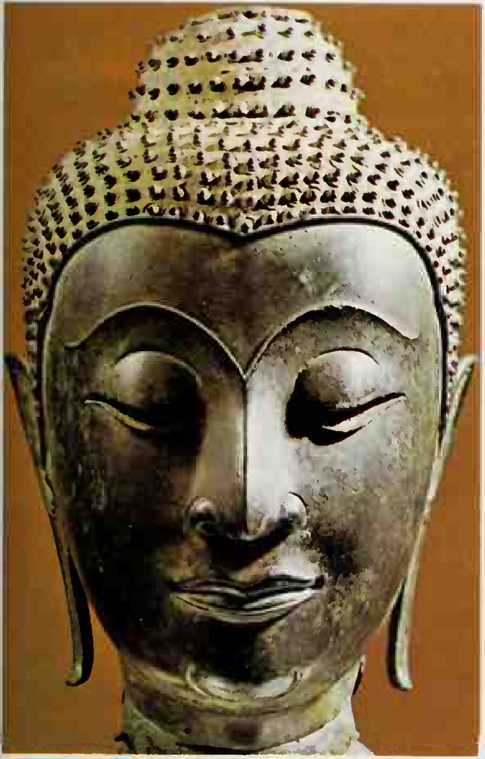
(See also ISLAM; MOHAMMED.)

DAVID PHILLIPS*

FURTHER READING: Ahmad Kamal, *The Sacred Journey* (Duell, Pearce, 1961); E. Guelloz, *Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Salem House, 1982); J. Hureau, *Mecca Today* (Hippocrene, 1980).

In the East meditation has been seen as a means to union with the Absolute, while in the West it is the mystic's path to God; both routes are beset with perils which can only be countered by use of proven disciplines

MEDITATION



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'The next step is to empty the mind, slowly to eliminate from the consciousness every thought of a practical nature, domestic or business problem as it intrudes': bronze head of Buddha, 15th century, now in the Museo Nationale di Arte, Rome

ONCE REGARDED almost exclusively as a preoccupation of mystics, saints and hermits, meditation is today an established method of achieving concentration and calmness. Many sportsmen incorporate the technique into their training programmes – e.g. the tennis player Bjorn Borg, Wimbledon Champion from 1977–1980.

Though common to Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, meditation has not played a particularly prominent role in the Christian tradition. Now, as a result of an unprecedented upsurge of interest in achieving states of mind in which the consciousness is expanded by various means, meditation is being rediscovered.

But why meditate? In a busy world is the time spent pondering on abstractions worth anything at all? Is it not just a futile pursuit, at best another 'opiate' with no practical benefit to recommend it? For the majority, the occasional periods of introspection are of little help. Men only become more confused by what emerges from their deeper reflections. Instead of the restorative relief they seek from the muddled complexity of their lives, they find themselves thinking about their problems more than ever.

Those who advocate meditation, however, say that if it is approached correctly, the exercise can be rewarding. For one thing, a short time devoted each day to the cultivation of a tranquil mind cannot be without its psychological benefits. Confusion only comes with wrongful methods. Meditation does not imply an escape from reality, nor a loss of consciousness; after all, there is little purpose in having experiences which one cannot recall having had.

The first requirement is a 'sanctuary', a room where one can perform the daily ritual in peace and quiet. A trained practitioner can meditate on top of a bus in the midst of the city's hubbub, but such surroundings are hardly conducive to meditation for the average person. Any room will do where one can sit undisturbed for at least 15 minutes at a stretch.

Relax and Empty the Mind

The best position is one of complete repose. One can meditate even while lying in bed, but there is a danger of falling asleep. Sitting in an easy position is therefore recommended in most Eastern systems. Having assumed a comfortable position, one should let the whole body relax. All the muscles must be loosened; all tension let go. Among the many aids used for inducing relaxation are rhythmic breathing; a gentle humming; a slight swaying of the torso while seated. Easiest of all perhaps, is mentally going over the parts of the body in which tension is likely to occur, starting from the feet; then the toes, knees, stomach, neck, hands, shoulders, face, jaws, forehead, eyes, the back of the head, the scalp; ensuring that each part in turn is free from strain. With the body relaxed, it becomes easier to achieve tranquillity.

The next step is to empty the mind, slowly to eliminate from the consciousness every thought of a practical nature, domestic or business problem as it intrudes. This, it might be objected, is easier said than done. But meditation requires patience and practice, and it is surprising how soon one can successfully fall into the routine.

One of the main problems confronting the beginner is to decide on a subject for meditation. Having put aside his worldly cares, what does he fill the vacuum with? Stray thoughts and day-dreams keep drifting in. It is precisely in order to prevent such aimless drifting that another factor is introduced at this stage: an objective device, a psycho-symbolic nucleus around which the thoughts are built up, or from which they are reflected or rebound. But the Mohammedan aspirant may not like to think in terms of Hindu symbols, nor the Christian of Buddhist. For that matter the agnostic or freethinker may disdain any of the formulations of the theistic practitioner. The choice of a symbol to meditate upon therefore becomes of great importance. Just any symbol will not do, because the ramifications of every symbol can be traced by subconscious processes along lines traditionally inherited, or rationally accepted, by the practitioner. So each religion and each school prescribes its own meditative material. The following is a brief outline of some of the major disciplines and methods used in meditation.

Union With the Absolute

Perhaps the most detailed and systematic presentation of meditative techniques can be found in Hindu writings, as exemplified in yoga. The aim of yoga is 'union' with the Absolute, achieved by progression through eight stages of development The first two pertain to external and internal 'ethics', with stress on non-injury and the elimination of negative emotions like anger, acquisitiveness, lust, greed, and the practice of equanimity and peace of mind. After these two ethical prerequisites we come to the third stage, namely, bodily postures, to inure the physical frame to the various positions assumed during meditation, some of which are extremely difficult. Next comes breath control, control of the *prana* (see BREATH), which is held to be one of the basic potencies of the universe. The air we breathe contains it, and the yogi practitioner subtilizes the air for its prana content and sends it streaming through his subtle body. This is followed by control of the senses, that is, withdrawing attention from all external distractions, or, as it is called, 'silencing the traffic of the senses'. By the time this stage is reached the body should be properly conditioned, the emotions under control, and all the mental faculties ready to be directed to a single goal.

The sixth stage is devoted to concentration *(dharana)* or holding the mind firm and steady. Here the student concentrates on a spot on a blank surface such as a wall; a point of light; the flame of a candle; a flower; the picture of a deity such as Krishna or Shiva; a letter of the alphabet. Yogis sometimes begin their meditation by concentrating with closed eyes on some part of their body: the top of the head; the space between the eyebrows; the tip of the nose. The picture of the yogi wrapt in meditation while contemplating his navel is not entirely fanciful. The navel can also serve as a focal point of concentration, for an important *chakra* (plexus, or centre of psychic energy) is situated near it.

Concentration itself must not be confused with meditation. The former implies an exercise of the will: the mind centres its powers on an object or idea till it yields its essence. Concentration brings mental energy to bear on a certain point so that with its conquest further doors are opened to the mind. Meditation on the other hand does not require any forcible harnessing of the will. It is not a smash-and-grab raid on the storehouse of the Infinite; it is something that emerges from the cessation of thought.

The seventh stage of yoga concerns contemplation *(dhyana)*, a turning within of the consciousness, a focusing of the mental faculties inwards. The eighth and last stage, called *samadhi*, is a state of superconsciousness, which is the supreme goal of yogic meditation.

Because of its stringency yoga can be a disheartening course for the average practitioner. The most that is generally attempted are elementary postures like the head-stand and simple exercises in breath control. Recent exponents have evolved their own variations on the theme, such as Transcendental Meditation, tailored to the needs of an age which demands instant results. Most of these variations entirely bypass ascetic doctrines and world-abnegation, and permit and indeed encourage a two-way movement between spirituality and worldly life.

The ancient Chinese system of meditation is best exemplified in the Taoist teachings. Taoism seems to go direct to the heart of meditation by the paradoxical method of not even trying to get there. 'The movement of the Tao (Way) is an easy return to within oneself.' Any anxious pursuit of the Tao will cause an impenetrable veil to fall across the aspirant's path and make him lose his bearings. He must cease from aspiring and reduce all striving, study, discourse, discipline, ceremonial and concentration, attenuating them till he arrives at the state of *wu-wei*, 'non-striving'. 'Doing spoils it', says the Tao Master. 'Grabbing misses it'. 'Reaching out on tiptoe you are unsteady'. 'The mighty Way is easy but people still choose the difficult little paths'. There is, in other words, no attempt to stir up consciousness by exhausting techniques, but a natural quiet process of allowing the mental sediment to 'settle down', resulting in a spontaneous revelation of the clear depths within.

The Zen method, again, presents a middle way between the stern practices of yoga and the methodlessness of Tao. Meditation here is largely a matter of 'Shut up' and 'Keep still'. But it also provides by means of question, parable, short poem, paradox, riddle, silence, or even a clout over the ear, a means of sudden illumination called *satori*.

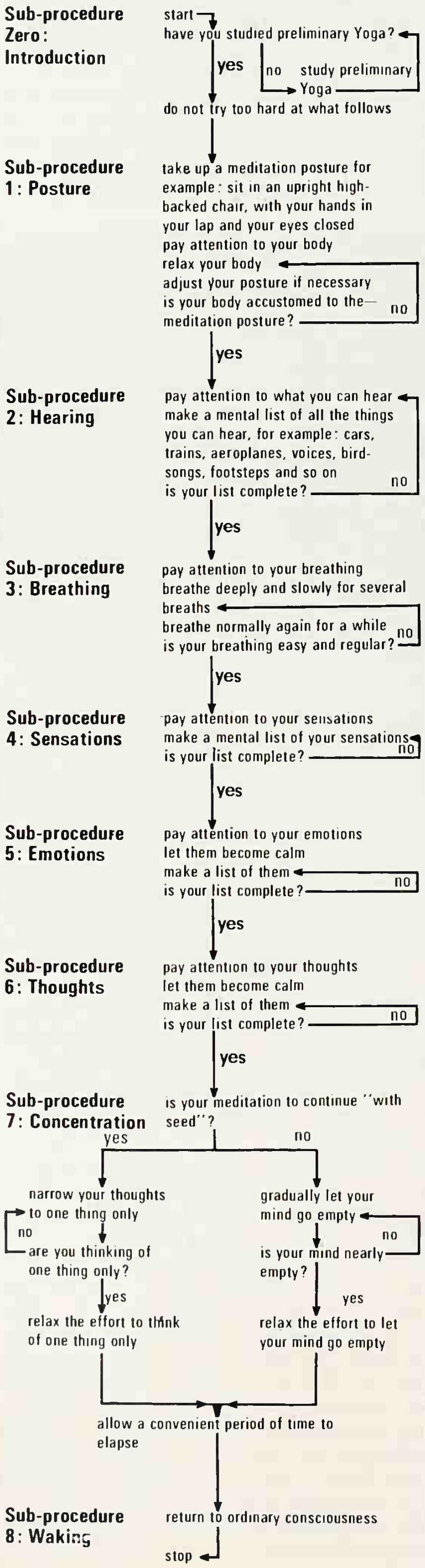
The Sufis, or mystics of Islam, also adapted their meditative techniques to suit their religious temperament. In Sufism there are several stages divided into two main groups: *maqam*, or man's effort, and *hal*, God's grace. It is said, 'Maqam is earned; hal is gifted'. Man's effort calls for all the rituals of religious observance, almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimages, prayers. It presupposes dedicated intention and demands effort. In due time external rituals are abandoned and one devotes oneself to the contemplation of higher things. 'When the mirror of the heart is polished by contemplation, the difference between the transient wealth of this world and the infinite treasure of heaven become manifest. It is then easy to reject the transitory and cling to that which abides.'

Repetition of the name of God plays an important part in Sufi mysticism. The Sufi sits in solitude and repeats without ceasing the name of Allah, letting his mind dwell on the mercy and glory of God. He must persevere until his heart takes up the refrain, and mind, heart and soul are suffused with the idea of God in the fullness of his mercy and power. Some Sufi teachers advocate progressive meditation during a period of retreat, every day of which is devoted to removing one 'veil' of the forty-fold veil covering the Face of God. The raising of the veils comprises graduated exercises in meditation, leading ultimately to ecstasy. The first step is 'watching the Watcher'; when one reaches the final stage of ecstasy, 'Everything perishes except his Face'.

Apart from these 'religious' methods, there exist a number of what might be called magical meditative techniques. Most of them involve recourse to a symbolic diagram. A common device employed by both Hindus and Buddhists is the *mandala* (see MANDALA), an elaborate symmetrical, usually circular design, representing the abode of certain occult potencies who manifest as deities. The latter are invoked by special ritual acts and the intonation of magic versicles or *mantras* (see MANTRA) and are believed to come forth to occupy the places assigned to them in the diagram.

THE FLOW OF MEDITATION

Instructions in the 'Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali' (2nd century BC) have been formalized by Dr John H. Clark of Manchester University in a flow diagram of the type prepared for computers: adapted from Dr Clark's article in *New Society* magazine (23 July 1970).


Sub-procedure Zero: Introduction
start
have you studied preliminary Yoga?
yes
no
study preliminary Yoga
do not try too hard at what follows
Sub-procedure 1: Posture
take up a meditation posture for example: sit in an upright high-backed chair, with your hands in your lap and your eyes closed
pay attention to your body
relax your body
adjust your posture if necessary
is your body accustomed to the meditation posture?
no
yes
Sub-procedure 2: Hearing
pay attention to what you can hear
make a mental list of all the things you can hear, for example: cars, trains, aeroplanes, voices, bird-songs, footsteps and so on
is your list complete?
no
yes
Sub-procedure 3: Breathing
pay attention to your breathing
breathe deeply and slowly for several breaths
breathe normally again for a while
is your breathing easy and regular?
no
yes
Sub-procedure 4: Sensations
pay attention to your sensations
make a mental list of your sensations
is your list complete?
no
yes
Sub-procedure 5: Emotions
pay attention to your emotions
let them become calm
make a list of them
is your list complete?
no
yes
Sub-procedure 6: Thoughts
pay attention to your thoughts
let them become calm
make a list of them
is your list complete?
no
yes
Sub-procedure 7: Concentration
is your meditation to continue "with seed"?
yes
no
narrow your thoughts to one thing only
no
are you thinking of one thing only?
yes
relax the effort to think of one thing only
gradually let your mind go empty
no
is your mind nearly empty?
yes
relax the effort to let your mind go empty
allow a convenient period of time to elapse
Sub-procedure 8: Waking
return to ordinary consciousness
stop

By kind permission of Dr J. H. Clark and New Society

Cosmic Crossroads

The mandala is regarded as a cosmic crossroads where the physical and spiritual worlds intersect. The procedure requires deep concentration on the mandala pattern, as a result of which its configuration is imprinted on the psyche of the practitioner and he can clearly see, with his mind's eye, the whole maze depicted outside. For those who might find this difficult an easier way is used. They may look at the mandala, then shut the eyes, and continue this a hundred or a thousand times, until the pattern is clearly visualized with the eyes closed.

The mandala is spoken of as a psychocosmogram, a picture of the universe conceived in diagrammatic form and projected on the screen of the psyche. The experiences undergone in this manner become intuitive visualizations of the meditator's own psychodynamic process. Without a long period of correct training there is every likelihood of the imagination running amuck. Even under controlled guidance the apparitions that he encounters in the journey through the intricate pathways of the mandala can be frightening enough. The demon-guardians and the fearful monstrosities that lurk in the dark recesses are ever ready to block his path and hack him to pieces.

Another system of meditation, often resorted to in the West is that of the Cabala (see CABALA), a Jewish mystical teaching evolved in the Middle Ages, although a much longer history has been claimed for it. Quite early in the course of its development this system was taken over by Christian scholars of the 16th century, and it is not always easy to distinguish the Jewish elements from the later accretions.

There are ten centres, called *sefiroth*, in the meditative device used by the Cabalists, arranged roughly like a tree. When inscribed on paper, the tree is depicted as if on a single plane, but in reality it is believed to be operative on four separate levels or 'worlds'. In the cabalistic technique the aspirant performs a series of meditative exercises, sometimes known as 'rising on the planes', in which he carries consciousness along a predetermined path that links the centres of the sefirotic tree. Each point is a gateway to a new world which has its guardians and its terrorizing demons. The pupil advances under proper tutelage from the simple to the more complex levels. He is conscious throughout his experience. This system is still practised but has achieved a certain notoriety as a result of its utilization by practitioners of the 'black arts'.

Meditation on the mandala and on the sefirotic tree represent the Eastern and Western systems which involve what occultists call the projection of the astral body (see ASTRAL BODY). In both the same general goal is sought: an attempt to make a journey into another dimension and to retain full conscious awareness of it on return. Whether we believe in the actual existence of the entities that are alleged to guard the zones or not, the fact remains that occultists of both schools, and practitioners of magic, black and white, have brought back vivid descriptions of their experiences while on such astral adventures. We may attribute them to the power of the imagination and the workings of a heightened faith, or dismiss them as hallucinations induced by some alchemy of the brain resulting from deep concentration on evocative archetypal symbols. But whatever the interpretation of such occult experiences might be, there can be no doubt that they are hazardous and can be injurious. The paths opened to the aspirant by encounters in a mandala trance, or on a limb of the sefirotic tree, are not to be ventured on lightly (see also PATHS).

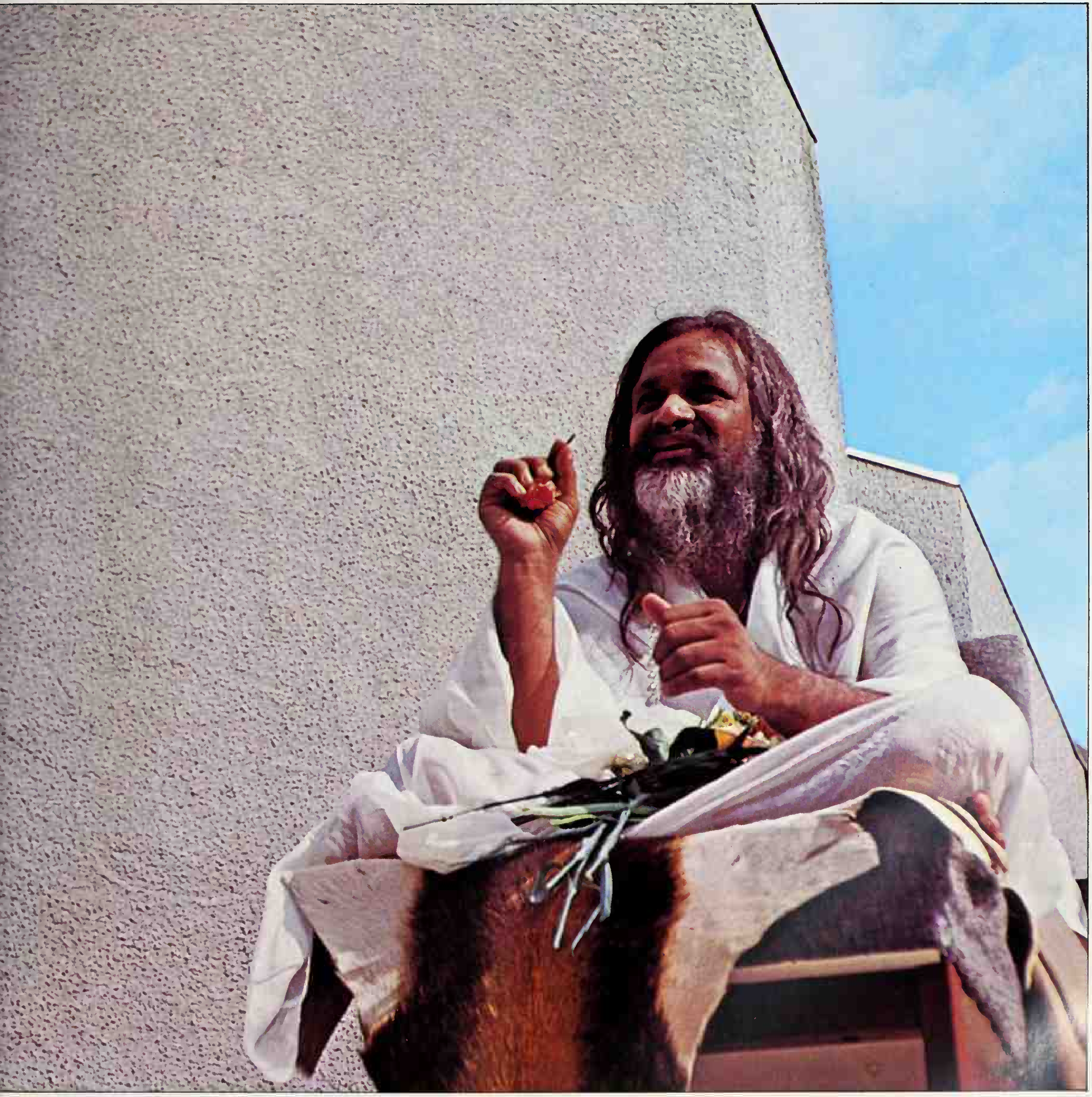
Buddhists, who practise meditation intensively, have been especially careful to emphasize the need not so much for meditation as for right meditation. This was thought to be of sufficient importance to be included as one of the eight fundamental principles of their religion. Misdirected or wrongful meditation can be worse than futile, it can be dangerous.

Meditation is being rediscovered in the West 'as a result of an unprecedented upsurge of interest in achieving states of mind in which the consciousness is expanded by various means': Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, one of many missionaries from East to West

Perils on the Christian Path

Against the background of all these methods that men have employed in their effort to attain enlightenment, beatitude or unity with the Absolute, it might be felt that the absence of a meditative regime in Christianity for the common man is a drawback to the contemplative life.

In fact, Christianity does not lack a



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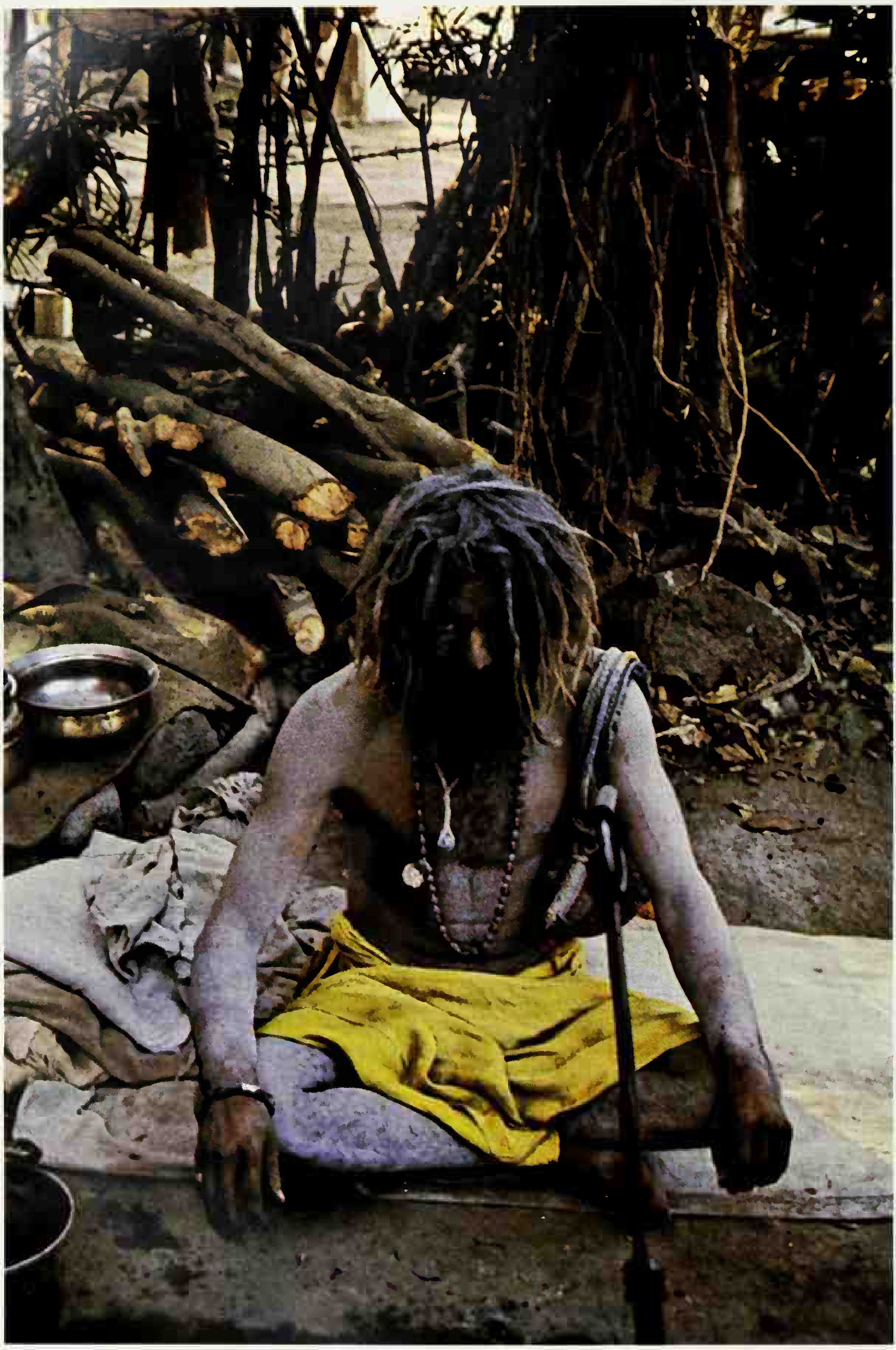


Navroze Contractor

Indian saddhu, or holy man, in deep meditation, supported by a crutch. In yoga, meditation involves numerous highly disciplined techniques, including breath control, bodily postures, control of the senses, concentration and contemplation, 'a focusing of the mental faculties inwards'

tradition of the kind found in many other religions. First derived from ancient Greek and Jewish sources, this tradition developed along its own lines. Meditation was practised by the early monks who dwelt in the desert regions of Egypt and Syria from the 3rd century AD. Their disciplines were at times so severe as to be scarcely credible today, and their experience with 'temptations' by the Devil and elemental creatures are as vivid as any brought back by occultists from the astral planes. A system somewhat akin to yoga, with emphasis on breathing and concentration on the plexuses, was followed in Greece by the Hesychast monks in the Middle Ages. Many of the saints of the Roman Catholic Church, among them St Francis of Assisi and St Teresa evolved their own meditative disciplines. The *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola outlines a stringent procedure in a contemplative process that has led many to spiritual exaltation. Countless Christian mystics have experienced the sudden transports that betoken the touch of the Divine Breath, and their written works are replete with meditative aids.

But all such methods are meant primarily for the recluse. The Church, it would seem, does not normally advocate meditation for the layman, apart from the periods of retreat set aside for the purpose in the religious calendar, such as the days between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Perhaps it is considered desirable to withdraw from general sanction the use of any 'device' that might bring one inadvertently into contact with what St Paul refers to as the 'Principalities and Powers, and the rulers of darkness in this world'.

For even the orthodox method can be a staggering experience for the untrained soul. Among mystics, one persistent phase in the more advanced stages is a period of spiritual privation that afflicts even the highest aspirants. St John of the Cross described it as the 'Dark Night of the Soul', St Teresa called it 'the great dereliction', and Mme Guyon 'the mystic death', while others referred to it as 'the descent into Hell'. These perils on the way are not easily borne, and the passage of meditation often lies through some such stage of black despair. When the untried student meditates he is cautioned to do so only on the acceptable patterns provided by long experience.

Some Christian denominations, among them several Quietist sects (see QUIETISM), practise various kinds of group meditation, where a number of persons gather together during service and sit in silence. In some cases a verse is read out from the Bible and the assembly simply bow their heads and meditate independently on its meaning. Something may or may not emerge from the group silence, but those who have attended such meetings have spoken of its beneficent influence in recharging the mind and spirit with dynamic power.

The Christian equivalent of finding God by 'paths many and devious' and by 'vain repetition' of his name, is through faith, homage and prayer. The real discipline is the one expressed in Christian conduct in daily life; what one mystic has spoken of as 'the practice of the Presence of God'. God does not have to be sought by difficult techniques, but is there for all who care to find him. Such at any rate is the mystical view. The psychologist C. G. Jung in his old age had a strange inscription carved over the door of his house. It was his final confession of faith: 'Called or Not Called, God is Present'.

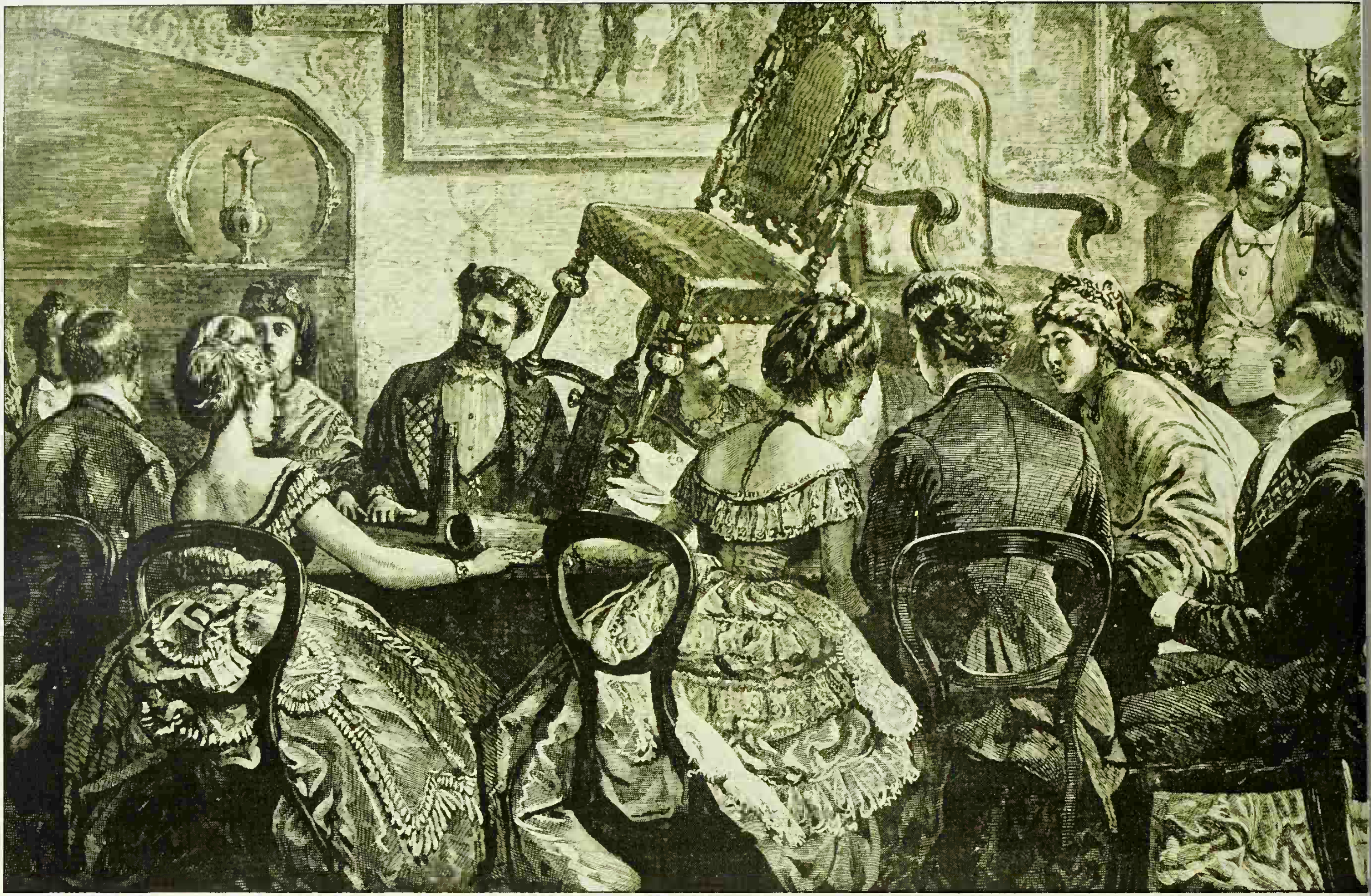
The posture of meditation for the Christian is not face to face, implying equality with the Creator, but on bended knees with head bowed in humility. For the ordinary Christian meditation is almost synonymous with prayer: in the words of the psalmist: 'Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer'.

(See also SUFIS; YOGA; ZEN.)

BENJAMIN WALKER

FURTHER READING: W. Johnston, *Silent Music* (Harper & Row, 1979); B. Khantipalo, *Calm and Insight* (Humanities, 1981); L. LeShan, *How to Meditate* (Little, Brown, 1974); D. Shapiro, *Meditation* (Aldine, 1980); B. Smith, *Meditation: The Inward Act* (McClelland, 1963).

MEDIUMS



In controlled conditions, mediums have produced phenomena for which no orthodox scientific explanation has yet been found; the author of the first article, on mental mediumship, suggests that at the least it merits study for the sidelights which it throws on the subconscious levels of the mind; physical manifestations are discussed in the second article

MEDIUM IS THE NAME given by Spiritualists to a person whom they believe is able to act as a medium of communication between the living and the dead. Modern Spiritualism arose in 1848 among more or less unsophisticated people in the United States, when the relatives of the Fox sisters claimed that these two young girls could communicate with the spirits of the dead by means of raps. Successors to the girls multiplied exceedingly on both sides of the Atlantic, which was hardly surprising at a time when the Darwinian theory of evolution was undermining the traditional religious view of man as an immortal spirit. Apparent demonstrations by mediums that the dead were not only still in existence but could actually communicate with the living were welcomed by many people with natural, if somewhat uncritical, joy. It must be remembered that some mediums did produce very apt messages purporting to come from beyond the grave, and the idea that a nearer source for those messages might be a subconscious level of the medium's own personality was not an easy one to envisage in the days before Freud had forced on our attention the fact that such levels existed.

This situation provided a delectable opportunity for the crooks who are always on the alert to exploit human credulity. Fraudulent mediums sprang up right and left, and even today they have many successors whose activities cast an unjustified slur on honest people who genuinely believe in their own mediumistic gifts, and who do on occasion produce phenomena in controlled conditions for which no scientifically orthodox explanation has yet been found.

Mediumship divides roughly into two types, physical and mental. A mental medium is a person who claims to be able, in certain states of consciousness, to see and talk with the dead, to transmit messages from them to the living and even, at times, to hand over his or her own body to discarnate (or disembodied) persons who can then communicate directly with the living. From the evidential angle this claim provokes two main questions. Firstly, what alternative mundane sources can be found for statements purporting to come from the dead? And secondly, are there any occasions on record where all such alternative sources appear to be ruled out and a discarnate source for a particular statement seems overwhelmingly likely?

Looking at mediumship simply as a psychological phenomenon, the questions it calls for are different: for instance, what is the psychological process involved in such experiences? What brings them about? Why does a person become a medium? How does mediumship relate to other psychological states? It should perhaps be said that some persons who are mediumistically gifted do not always believe that the communications they receive necessarily come from the dead, and a more neutral name for mediums, which includes such people, and is often used, is 'sensitive'. In our culture more women than men are mediums, so from now on they will be referred to here as feminine.

Increasing Dissociation

The first impression gained by a neutral observer when watching an honest medium at work is likely to be that the verbal or written utterances she makes to her sitters (a sitter is the name usually given to a person who visits mediums) are welling up from subconscious levels of her own psyche. Very often these utterances show every sign of having originated within her psyche – but not always: on occasion a good medium will impart relevant and specific information to

Previous page Experiment with a ouija board at the Benson Herbert Paraphysical Laboratory in Wiltshire; it is likely that the 'messages' [illegible] this way arise in the subconscious [illegible] people concerned but, as with the [illegible] medium, the information appears [illegible] from an external source. In both cases [illegible] that contact is made with the sub[illegible] level of the psyche
Above Participants [illegible] seance in the 19th century: physical phenomena sometimes take the form of telekinesis when objects, in this case a chair, move through the air apparently without any force being applied

A good medium appears to make meaningful contact in some unknown way with remote events and personalities, and even at times with the dead

an unknown sitter which she apparently could not have obtained by normal means, and which is too detailed to be reasonably attributed to a series of lucky guesses. In fact it gives the impression that at the least she has made subconscious contact with events distant in time or space, or time and space, in some unknown and possibly extra-sensory fashion.

There are many stages of mediumship and each successive stage seems to imply an increasing degree of dissociation, in which communication with the subconscious gets progressively easier. When dissociation is slight and a medium not far from her normal waking state, she usually behaves as if fleetingly aware of various discarnate presences whom she describes as friends or relatives of persons present to whom they wish messages to be given. As a rule these messages are vague and they could apply to any one of a number of people.

The 'Control' Emerges

Some mediums can induce a state of dissociation so deep that it reaches trance level and at this point their normal personality is replaced by quite a different one, whom Spiritualists accept as a discarnate human being who has taken over the medium's body and whom they call a 'control'. Variants of this phenomenon have been known throughout history, but the control is not always looked on as human. For the Witch of Endor it was a familiar spirit, for the Cumaean Sybil it was the god Apollo, for Neoplatonists a beneficent daemon, for the early Christians, as a rule, a devil, and in Voodoo today it is thought to be a god.

On the whole modern psychologists tend to look on 'controls' as split-off facets of the medium's own personality and point out that similar 'splits' can occur apart from mediumship and may be hysterical symptoms or dramatizations of repressed tendencies. But one should perhaps bear in mind that the dissociation of mediumship does not seem very different in kind from that experienced by the rest of us. We all go into daydreams in which the outer world is forgotten. We all find that a forgotten name or tune, or even the solution to a problem, will float into our minds unexpectedly from 'nowhere'. And reports by creative persons of unexpected 'upwellings' of material from the subconscious are legion.

Many such creative upwellings take the form of images and symbols, in much the same way as mediums often claim to receive their information. Sometimes, for instance, new ideas emerge in visual symbols, or new ideas may come in the form of automatic speech. Dante declared that as he was pondering how to begin a poem, 'my tongue spoke as though by its own impulse'. Other poets and writers may feel as if a work were directly dictated to them. Blake claimed this of a major poem and said that he could praise it because 'I dare not pretend to be other than the secretary'.

But it is not necessary to be a genius or a medium to bring up material from the subconscious, independently of the conscious mind. Some people can do it by automatic writing, but what they write is usually, though not always, fragmentary, incoherent and of little interest. Others, from medicine-men to palmists, do it by some such technique as 'reading' cards, hands, bones, tea-leaves and so on; others again by the use of dowsing twig or pendulum (see DOWSING; DIVINATION). Subconscious material can also emerge through collective action, such as spelling out words on a ouija board or making a table tilt when a group of people place their fingers on them.

It will be noticed that all these procedures have one thing in common with control mediumship; any information given appears to the performer to come from a source exterior to himself. He 'sees' it in the cards or the bones or the hand. The pendulum or the dowsing twig moves independently of his conscious will. All such exteriorizations, however foolish they seem, may serve a useful purpose by releasing the conscious mind of the performer from a sense of responsibility for what is said. This would reduce tension and, perhaps, facilitate contact with the subconscious level of the psyche which appears able to receive what, for want of a better term, may be called extra-sensory 'signals'.

The quality of mediumistic utterances varies enormously, and to some extent in relation to the intellectual level of the medium. They are usually banal and fragmentary and in most cases seem almost like the product of a kind of dream state; nor need they be true to fact. One well-meaning trance medium implored me repeatedly on behalf of my dead husband to cease my excessive mourning for his loss, and she was not deterred by my assurances that he was alive and well. To her trance personality all grey-haired women must, so it seemed, be sorrowing widows. But although mediocre and even dishonest mediums exist, this does not alter the fact that on occasion a good one appears to make meaningful contact in some unknown way with remote events and personalities, and, on the face of it, even at times with the dead.

'Like Diving into Dark Fog'

Before seeking to discover what in fact happens on such occasions, one must be clear as to what appears to happen. Take a sitting with a trance medium. It usually opens with the medium remaining quietly seated in a chair for a short time with her eyes closed. Then, as a rule, she begins to breathe heavily, perhaps gives a groan or two and falls into a deep though restless sleep. Shortly afterwards she wakes up as the control, whose voice, mannerisms and whole personality seem quite different from her normal one. Controls range from childish characters, of either sex, to 'Red Indian' chiefs, Arabian physicians and Chinese sages – but they are all liable to make childish mistakes about the countries in which they claim to have lived on earth. Most mediums have only one control, but others have two or even three. One of the regular controls will turn up at every sitting, the claim being that its task is to safeguard the medium's welfare and to regulate the attempts made by discarnate spirits to communicate through her. Even so, a purported intruding 'spirit' may break in, and make unexpected statements which are found to relate to someone not present.

As a rule the control begins by reporting the presence of discarnate 'communicators' who wish him to transmit messages from them. Sometimes sitters say that they recognize these communicators and sometimes they do not. The communicators are usually given a name such as John or Mary, though occasionally a good medium will get hold of an improbable name which is correct. Sometimes, with a familiar sitter, the control will allow a communicator to take over the medium's body directly, and when this happens a second marked change may come about in her voice, speech and vocabulary; there have even been occasions when reliable and intelligent sitters felt that the personality who purported to talk through a medium's lips had mannerisms resembling those of the deceased friend or relative it claimed to be.

These communicators often complain that the process of making contact with mundane conditions through an unfamiliar body is hard, painful and depressing – one compared it to diving into a dark fog – and they account for the triviality of many communications by saying that to get through more than distorted fragments is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, and in spite of the mass of inapposite and dream-like material which even the best mediums are liable to produce, at times a communicator's performance is too lifelike and convincing for a dispassionate inquirer to feel comfortable about rejecting its authenticity out of hand.

It has been observed that an entranced medium will serve up, as coming from the discarnate, snippets of information which could, unconsciously as well as consciously, have been guessed or inferred from a sitter's behaviour and appearance, a wedding-ring or unwisely revealing remarks – but no more. Many, but not all, controls will fish or grope for information from the sitter, which is natural enough, but inexperienced sitters are liable to give away more than they realize. It should also, in fairness, be said that some sceptical sitters are so determined to give away nothing that they create an atmosphere as cold and silent as a winter's night at the North Pole, and this is unlikely to encourage any type of skill or sensitivity. The conscious self of an honest medium should not be blamed for the deception or evasiveness of the trance personality, for even if she realizes what has been said, which she usually does not, she may have no idea that its source was her own subconscious observation or inference. Mediums do not know the actual source of what floats into their minds, however much they believe their own interpretation of it.

The Role of Memory

A medium's ignorance of the source of her information is shown by another possible alternative to certain apparent contacts with the dead – unconscious memory.

A well-known member of the Society for Psychical Research, Mrs K.M. Goldney, went to a public demonstration of purported spirit communication at which the medium said that two spirits, Alec and Bessie White, had come for her. Two years earlier Mrs Goldney had had a private sitting with that medium, who while in trance had given her the same names. Although they had meant nothing to her at that time she had pretended to recognize them, in order to see whether they would again be given to her later on. By the time of the public demonstration she had forgotten this incident and was only reminded of it when she subsequently found the names in her notebook. It looks here as if her presence at the public demonstration had stimulated a latent memory in the medium.

Latent memories can also emerge in non-mediums, through a ouija board or in automatic writing, for instance. There are in fact many hints that the subconscious never forgets. If so, a medium's statements can never provide watertight evidence, even of mundane ESP, unless it is certain that she could not have had normal access to the information she imparts.

Subconscious Histrionics

When trying to assess the authenticity of a purported communicator, a further complication is that in all human beings, not mediums alone, the subconscious is a great dramatizer. Dreams make that clear enough. Professor H.H. Price once pointed out in a broadcast that the more one is inclined to reject the survivalist explanation of mediumistic phenomena, the more one is bound to emphasize this power of subconscious dramatization.

But whatever the real nature of controls or communicators and however much a medium may subconsciously dramatize, the fact still remains that on occasion she appears to obtain information by some unknown and apparently extra-sensory means. What alternatives are there to the belief that this information has been given her by the discarnate? Single 'hits' can in theory be attributed to a lucky coincidence, but when a complicated series of similarly apt statements are repeated by several mediums independently, as in the Vandy case to be quoted later, this explanation appears fanciful. Excluding, then, chance coincidence and knowledge obtained by recognized sensory means, the simplest paranormal explanation would seem to be telepathy from somebody present at the sitting; the next, telepathy from some distant living person. A further paranormal, but still mundane, alternative is that the medium could have perceived clairvoyantly some document of which the existence was not known at the time, such as a letter written by a dead person, which was only found after the sitting (as in Mrs Leonard's book tests). That telepathy and precognition do occur has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of a number of eminent scientists, and the indignant denial of others.

Here is a first-hand example of apparent telepathy from the sitter which led the medium to believe she was in genuine communication with the dead. I had been asked to test a medium I had never seen. I went under an assumed name, looking like a very unworldly country cousin, but in my bag I carried a recent letter from a well-known actor. When the medium was in full flight, describing quite aptly my personal problems, I slipped my hand into the bag, which was out of her sight, took hold of the letter and thought of the actor. Immediately she paused, looked at me in a puzzled way and said, in a tone which I felt did credit to my country-cousin outfit, 'Have you anything to do with the theatre?'; she then described the actor and in no time was producing messages for him from the lately deceased Ivor Novello. These, rightly or wrongly, I ascribed to a natural association of ideas since the two were not particular friends.

Now take a much quoted case of apparent precognition which on the face of it looked like communication with the dead. It was reported to the Society for Psychical Research by Dr S.G. Soal, a lecturer in mathematics at London University, and well known for his pioneering work on experimental ESP. Gordon Davis, a childhood friend whom Dr Soal thought had been killed, purported to communicate through a medium whom he was testing. 'Davis' reminded Dr Soal of many childhood incidents and then gave a detailed description of a house, and some of its contents, in which, so he said, he had lived before his death. Dr Soal thought little of this description, but he did note it down at the time and had his notes witnessed. That was fortunate, for three years later he heard by chance that Davis had not been killed. On visiting him Dr Soal found to his great surprise that the house was just as the medium had described it, including a number of ornaments which Davis had not possessed until he had moved into the house about a year after Dr Soal's sitting.

Continuing Sense of Purpose

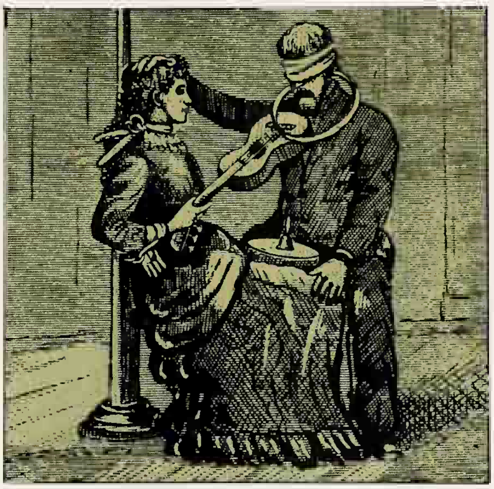
But mediumship can produce greater puzzles than this, including some which actually suggest continuing intention on the part of individuals who have survived bodily death. In some of these cases, the only alternative explanation, apart from collective cheating or a fantastic series of chance coincidences, seems to be that several mediums have performed the extraordinary feat of collecting snippets of information telepathically from various living persons whom they did not know, and then combining and dramatizing them into wishes expressed by a discarnate spirit.

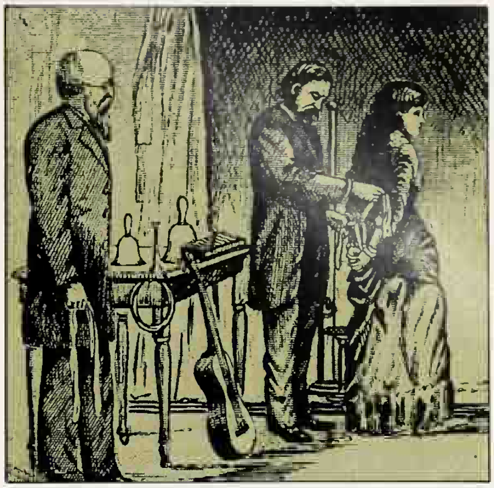
It will be obvious that it must be very rare for such cases to occur in apparently watertight conditions, because most sittings with mediums are not undertaken by investigators who have taken precautions against all sources of leakage, but by bereaved persons who are usually only too ready to jump at the slightest hint that they can communicate with those they have loved and lost. Fortunately a few exceptionally gifted mediums have provided a number of such cases, since they allowed themselves to be studied over long periods by expert investigators. To the neutral observer their work makes it clear that there is something, produced in all honesty, to be explained.

The Vandy Case

A good example of complex mediumship is the case of Edgar Vandy, which has been exhaustively analysed by Professor C.D. Broad. Vandy was a clever engineer, who was in the process of designing a new type of machine to reproduce lettering and so on by electromechanical means, when he was drowned at the early age of 38. One Sunday morning a friend of his, N.J., had taken him by car to visit an estate in Sussex, where N.J's sister was secretary to the owner. The day was hot, and the two men decided to bathe in the swimming pool which, being fed from a stream, was somewhat cloudy and slippery. Edgar was a poor swimmer and could not dive. He and N.J. undressed, and N.J. stated later that Edgar was ready about three minutes before him, and went

The American stage performer Annie Eva Faye was suspected of producing fraudulent physical phenomena, but there were occasions when it was impossible to prove that she was guilty. *Right* An observer holds her while she produces manifestations and *(far right)* her hands are tied by a member of the investigating committee





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to the pool, where he drowned shortly after.

At the inquest the essence of N.J.'s evidence was that on reaching the pool he had seen Edgar lying face downwards on the water, splashing and fluttering his hands. N.J. jumped in, but Edgar was sinking by the time he reached him and he could not keep a grip on him. He went for help, when Edgar finally sank. The doctor's view of the medical evidence was that Edgar had dived in, struck his jaw, and lost consciousness.

But Edgar's two brothers, George and Harold, were not satisfied. Edgar could not dive and they could not understand why attempts to help him should have been so unsuccessful. Although George did not believe in survival, he was a member of the SPR, and he thought it possible that trance mediums might throw light on the manner of Edgar's death. To this end he arranged for a series of six strictly anonymous sittings with four different mediums. One of these was to be a proxy sitting, taken by a Methodist minister, Drayton Thomas, with the famous medium, Mrs Leonard. (A proxy sitting is one in which a stranger, who knows no details about the deceased, represents the person interested.) In this case Mr Thomas was told no more than Edgar's name and that the relatives were in some doubt as to the cause of his death. The other five sittings with three other mediums were taken by George and Harold separately, under assumed names. George sat with all three of them, Harold with two.

Two main topics were mentioned by all four mediums: Edgar's death and the machine he was working on. As regards the death, Professor Broad points out the remarkable fact that two themes were common to all six sittings: first, that Edgar fell and his head was hit and injured, and second, that one or more persons were present, that it might be thought that they had failed to save his life through cowardice or incompetence and that he wished to shield them from blame. In five of the sittings there were references to water and drowning, and to Edgar's death being a strangely unlucky event which could easily have been avoided. In four, the mediums said that it was not due to suicide or culpable carelessness and that there was a feeling of dizziness connected with the accident. In three, there were references to a large scar which Edgar had said would always identify him.

To demonstrate the improbability of chance coincidence being an explanation for the many 'hits' made by the four mediums, Professor Broad asks three questions: firstly, what proportion of the male population of England are drowned each year in open-air swimming pools, after falling mysteriously and getting a crack on the head?; secondly, what proportion of them are skilled technicians devoting themselves to inventions?; and thirdly, what proportion of them fall into both these categories? He appears to think fraudulent collusion between the experimenter, George Vandy, and the mediums equally improbable – and indeed, their successes did not convince Mr Vandy of survival after death.

Conclusions to be Drawn

In this case, then, it seems hard to avoid some kind of paranormal hypothesis. Professor Broad thinks that the minimal one to fit the facts would be that the mediums acquired the various items of information by telepathy from a number of living persons, and dramatized them subconsciously as coming from the dead. In that case, he asks why did certain very relevant items which would presumably have been in N.J.'s mind fail to appear? The maximal paranormal hypothesis, he suggests, would be that Edgar Vandy's personality had survived the death of his body and was deliberately communicating some of its thoughts and feelings telepathically to the various mediums.

All four mediums in this case spoke as if it were the intention of a surviving Edgar Vandy to shield his friend or friends from undeserved criticism. Signs of intention on the part of the dead seem to be the best evidence for survival at present available.

The present position regarding the evidence for survival provided by mediumship appears to be something like this: it is extremely hard to ascribe the best material provided by the best mediums to chance, or fraud, or to information obtained by sensory means and subconsciously remembered. If these explanations are excluded there seem to be two alternatives: either mediums can obtain information from the discarnate, as they themselves believe, or they get it by means of ESP of mundane events, which is more efficient and widely ranging than has ever been observed in other situations and which they then dramatize subconsciously to fit a particular case.

Some aspects of the psychology of mediumship may have been glimpsed in the foregoing outline of the evidence it claims to provide for survival, but one further aspect should be mentioned as it gives an interesting clue to the oddities and limitations of both mediumistic utterances and certain spontaneous ESP-type experiences. In both cases, information which has not come through one of the known senses appears to have been received at a subconscious level, and it has often been noticed that subconscious material, no matter whether it has originated in an individual's own psyche or has penetrated it from outside, sometimes has difficulty in rising to the surface in a straightforward manner. It seems as if some kind of censorship has to be by-passed. A similar impression is often given by dreams. Hence, information which appears to have reached the subconscious in some paranormal fashion from an exterior source, whether mundane or not, is liable to emerge disguised or distorted, or obliquely by means of an associated idea or a symbol. Then it will have to be interpreted, and here both medium and sitter can make mistakes.

Thinking in Pictures

A few examples may clarify the pattern. Topsy, the control of a well-known medium, Mrs Warren Elliot, who allowed her work to be studied by serious investigators, seemed to be groping for the identifying fact that in life a certain communicator had much enjoyed rice pudding. She spoke of India, then of some hot place with dark people, then of palms, then bananas, and finally she said, 'He laughs and shows Topsy a lot of rice. There must be a joke about rice – lots and lots of rice – more rice, never tired.'

Conversely, associated ideas in a sitter's mind may lead a medium along a trail towards no particular goal. After a small dinner, at which three scientists were my fellow guests, a medium who was known to none of us was brought in to demonstrate his gift of ESP. On this occasion he made no claim to communicate with the dead, but merely to perceive images which he left to us to interpret. His first image was of me hastily putting in order a mass of sheets of typescript. This was a bull's eye because, unknown to anyone present, the day before I had been hurriedly putting together the untidy scattered sheets of the carbon copy of the manuscript of a book. From this impression the medium passed on to two incidents mentioned in the book, an old manor house connected with one of them, three pictures in that house, including a Romney, in which I had delighted as a child, and so on. None of these linked items were in my conscious thoughts, but all were correct.

'The Return of Charles Dickens'

Spiritualists believe that dead authors have sometimes returned and dictated posthumous works through mediums. One such case concerned Charles Dickens, who died suddenly leaving unfinished his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Four years later there was published a completion of the story, supposedly written automatically by the medium T.P. James, an uneducated mechanic of Brattleboro, Vermont. The style was in many ways an excellent parody of Charles Dickens, and though there were passages that were flat and uninspired, there were others that were successful. Spiritualists hailed the 'return of Dickens' with enthusiasm. If true, it was certainly remarkable that an uneducated man could produce such a good parody of the great author's style...

It so happens that there is some direct evidence to show that the Spiritualist interpretation is unsound. Many years after Dickens's death, a manuscript was discovered containing a later portion of the story of Edwin Drood. This portion does not feature at all in the James version. Moreover, Dickens's intentions as to the end of his story were very definite and well known to his son, Charles Dickens the Younger, and to his illustrator, Sir Luke Fildes. There are many indications in the completed portion of the novel that he was sticking closely to his declared plan. In the James version the plot is rather clumsily changed, and no use is made of various pointers to the solution of the mystery that Dickens had incorporated in the first half of the book.

D. J. West, *Psychical Research Today*

A medium's impressions frequently emerge by means of symbols and these often take the form of visual images, which is natural enough as the subconscious, like primitive man, seems to think in images rather than in the verbalizations of the highly educated. 'Topsy' once deduced, for instance, that a couple had been 'nearly married and then not married', because a communicator had shown her a wedding dress and then let it fall. And, similarly, one of the 'cross-correspondence' sensitives, Dame Edith Lyttelton, told me that she had been made aware of her pianist grandson's death in action by 'seeing' his grand piano covered with a Union Jack.

Mrs Leonard's control, Feda, whose personality, like Topsy's, was that of an artless young girl, said that she got her information in several different ways. She might seem to herself to hear words or other sounds, or to see written words or imitative or symbolic pictures. She said that impressions came more easily in the form of symbolic visual images than in words but that she often found it difficult to interpret them. She sometimes claimed to have feelings of, say, roughness or coldness. Incidentally, some mediums seem to pick up the type of pain a purported communicator had suffered from in life, and actually experience the pain themselves.

Both the cross-correspondence communicators and Feda's insisted that from their point of view communication with the living was very difficult. Professor Broad has summarized the description by Feda's communicators of the various methods they could use to convey information to her. One was by actually speaking to her, the other by telepathy, and of this, they said, there were several modes. Suppose, for instance, that they wanted telepathically to convey the idea 'horse'. The simplest way was to create an auditory or visual image of the word in Feda's mind or an image of the horse itself; or a symbolic image of, say, a jockey with a whip; or they might convey the idea without an image of any kind. One of the communicators drew an interesting distinction between himself projecting an idea or image into Feda's mind and her playing the active role and reading his. In the latter case she might take up some quite unimportant thought which had nothing to do with what he was trying to communicate.

An important factor in mediumship is the relation between individual mediums and sitters. Some sitters evoke interesting material from a medium, others by their chilling attitude will reduce her to a state of numbed inhibition. But even with good sitters, one will stimulate one medium more than another, and another sitter will do the reverse. A third, however open-minded and sympathetic at a conscious level, will never get any results at all. It is as if there were some subconscious interaction between medium and sitter of which, so far, nothing is understood.

Mediumship has received less psychological study than might have been expected, seeing that it is a phenomenon which arises in many different cultures. This may be due in part to distaste for the credulity with which much of it is surrounded and to the prevalence of fraudulent and mediocre mediums, and in part to the widespread belief today that survival after death is out of the question. Yet, even if that were so, good mediumship would merit study for the interesting sidelights it appears to throw, not only on subconscious levels of human personality, but on subconscious interaction between the living. ROSALIND HEYWOOD

Physical Phenomena

Throughout history physical events have been reported that do not accord with current scientific notions of what is possible. These events may be classified under two heads: firstly, those that arise spontaneously, appearing to be associated with some definable place, time and circumstances; secondly, those that appear to centre around a person, who is then observed under more or less controlled conditions with a view to inducing further manifestations of a similar character. When the inducement is reputedly successful, the person will be described by psychical researchers as a physical medium, and the effects produced will be described as physical phenomena, usually taking the form of materialization or telekinesis.

Materialization is the term applied to figures, ranging from barely visible wisps to fully-formed and clothed bodies, that are said to manifest, sometimes before the observer's eyes, out of a substance known as teleplasm or ectoplasm that allegedly issues from the orifices of the medium; it must be said that it often bears an unfortunate resemblance to muslin or cheesecloth (see ECTOPLASM). Telekinesis is the movement of objects through the air without any known force being applied, and the levitation upwards of objects, and sometimes people, sometimes with contact but without upward pressure and sometimes without any contact at all (see also PSYCHOKINESIS).

Other typical phenomena are raps and bangs on floors and walls, touches from invisible hands, voices speaking from nowhere, writing or objects appearing without explanation (so-called 'apports'; see PERMANENT PARANORMAL OBJECTS), the playing of musical instruments by 'no one', and gusts of cold air. In some cases these manifestations have been combined with other phenomena more typical of spiritualistic seances, as where an allegedly materialized figure purports to embody someone who has died; or where voices appear to speak to sitters through a large metal cone that floats in space, and is known as a 'trumpet'.

Although one of the by-products of the Spiritualist movement has been a massive history of fraudulent mediumship, the second half of the 19th century being studded with materialized figures of dubious authenticity, there have been many cases in which it has been impossible to prove that the medium concerned was guilty of fraud. Until comparatively recently the question of fraudulent experimenters was not canvassed as a possibility, and in the 1920s, the heyday of vigorous controversy over the reality of physical phenomena, it was only the competence of the researcher that was attacked. If poor observation and inaccuracy in reporting were the only charges laid against the evidence it would be difficult to resist the conclusion that physical mediumship is a fully proven reality, and it is not surprising that the possibility that the experimenter is not a fool but a knave has become entrenched in the modern mind.

It may be remarked that the men impaled on these unattractive twin horns have in many cases been of excellent reputation and sometimes of outstanding quality in their field. Professor Morselli, after his own investigation of the medium Eusapia Palladino, reproached 'scientists who have remained deaf and blind before all the affirmation, not

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William Davies

Above left **Ectoplasmic hand produced by Margery Crandon, a famous 1920s medium, controversy over whose physical phenomena deeply divided the SPR in the US** ***Centre*** **Mme Eugene Picquart, a famous French medium, as Mephistopheles** ***Right*** **Medium tied to a chair; trumpets and various musical instruments are part of the physical medium's apparatus**

of credulous sectarians, but of serious and worthy observers such as Crookes, Lodge and Richet.' (Sir Oliver Lodge was a Fellow of the Royal Society and Professor Charles Richet was a physician, physiologist and Nobel prizewinner.) It must be fair to say that in no other field of study has the unequivocal testimony of so many witnesses of the highest calibre been discounted and written off as crass stupidity, or worse.

Levitated onto a Table

Rev. W. Stainton Moses, a man of irreproachable character, must be accounted one of the more extraordinary figures in a field where extraordinary figures abound. He was primarily, in his own estimation, a mental medium; initially he was inclined to speak sceptically about physical phenomena, so he may well have been surprised, after some months of investigation, to find himself levitated onto a table, according to his own report.

He always took the view that physical effects emanated from rather 'low' spirits, but his own experiences, recorded in private notebooks presumably for his own reading, relate a series of miraculous events, including direct writing and the passage of objects through closed doors. It seems impossible to believe that his entire life was permeated by a continuous series of deliberate frauds, and a limited form of insanity (not perceived by any of his contemporaries) seems a more acceptable explanation.

But if insanity is to be imputed to Moses, then it must also be imputed to Edward Cox, a shrewd and wealthy Serjeant-at-law who was one of the principal witnesses to Moses's mediumship and who seems from his writings and his career to have been entirely normal but for the nature of the events he attests.

There exist independent accounts by Moses and Cox (both published in full in *Light*, Spring, 1967) describing a table levitation that took place in the most unlikely circumstances. There are minor discrepancies, pointing to non-collaboration rather than to common invention, but both agree that the two of them were sitting, on the evening of 2 June 1873, in Cox's dining room; Cox was opening or reading his letters, and Moses was reading a paper. Suddenly loud raps came from the heavy mahogany table, which presently quivered, swayed violently, and moved forward. Cox records: 'I then suggested that it would be an invaluable opportunity, with so great a power in action, to make a trial of motion without contact, the daylight, the place, the size and weight of the table, making the experiment a crucial one. Accordingly we stood upright, he on one side of the table, I on the other side of it. We stood two feet from it, and held our hands eight inches above it. In one minute it rocked violently. Then it moved over the carpet... seven inches. Then it rose three inches from the floor on the side on which my friend was standing. Then it rose equally on my side...'

If Moses suffered from delusions, then so obviously did Cox. And so, by the same hypothesis, did Crookes and his wife, for three independent accounts exist, one by Crookes and one by Lady Crookes, of a D.D. Home sitting at which Cox was also present, when a phantom glided across the floor playing an accordion and deposited it on the floor, then sank into the boards up to the armpits and vanished.

Returning to matters that can be properly assessed, such as the all-important creditability of the witnesses, the older testimony is at a disadvantage, in that it becomes more and more difficult for us to think ourselves back into the state of mind of a person who was born, like Stainton Moses, in 1839. In more recent times another medium, Kathleen Goligher, who was born in 1898, was investigated extensively during the years 1913 to 1921 by Dr W.J. Crawford, Lecturer in Mechanical Engineering at Belfast University. It must be said at once that Crawford's methods were entirely unsatisfactory, since he worked alone most of the time with a circle composed of the medium and six other members of her family, and in very dim light. In his three books on the Golighers he described the most amazing events in the most phlegmatic style, and resolutely applied plain mechanical principles to the caprices of table levitation. After weighing the medium, and finding that the weight of the levitated table had transferred itself to her, Crawford concluded that 'psychic structures' must emanate from the body of the medium, raising the table by a cantilever effect. But it must be said that at a later stage he photographed something strongly resembling shreds of cloth tied to the legs of the table or the medium.

The testimony of two witnesses to Crawford's work, who later identified themselves, is however very striking. A letter, dated 31 December 1913 from Sir William Barrett, a former President of the Society for Psychical Research, to Sir Oliver Lodge records: 'I have just returned from Belfast and had one remarkable sitting with Dr Crawford and his young medium, a girl of seventeen... The physical phenomena were amazing, in sufficient red light to see all the sitters with clasped hands sitting round and some 2 feet distant from a small table. I saw the table rise about 18 inches and made all the sitters hold up their hands which were clearly visible whilst the table remained suspended. Then I was allowed to go within the circle and try to force the table down which was impossible, I sat on the table and could not force it down. The table then of its own accord turned upside down and I was allowed to try and lift it but it was impossible the top seemed riveted to the floor...'

Barrett was a difficult man, and quite unable to punctuate, but it has never been suggested that he was the sort of person to be deluded into thinking he was wrestling with a suspended table.

The other witness, W. Whately Smith (later Carington), was said to be a heavy drinker in later life, and if it seems plausible for him to have had an alcoholic hallucination on the same lines as Barrett's sober report this may be grasped at as the explanation of his report in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (Volume 30), describing experiences very similar to Barrett's at a sitting on 9 December 1916. It is difficult to see how Barrett and Carington could have been deceived, but Carington himself sounds a proper note of caution by saying, 'I am well aware that a single sitting, however satisfactory, is not sufficient evidence for the formation of *final* judgments, especially on so precarious a subject.'

Some of the most carefully described and well-instrumented experiments were carried out not by scientists but by Mr Harry Price in 1923, and reported in his book *Stella C.*, published two years later.

A number of these sittings were attended by council members of the Society for Psychical Research; and while lying on the floor gazing through the legs of the medium, the Society's research officer, E.J. Dingwall was fortunate enough to see 'a white egg-shaped body beginning to draw towards the centre of the floor under the table... To the end nearest the medium was attached a thin white neck like a piece of macaroni. It advanced towards the centre and then rapidly withdrew to the shadow.' The reported phenomena included raps, bangs, flashes, playing of musical instruments, table levitations, and the movement of objects enclosed in a cage or imprisoned under a large chemical bubble, the surface of which remained unbroken.

A Fall in Temperature

Another interesting feature of these sittings is careful reporting on the subject of cold breezes. These are commonly reported at sittings, and have sometimes been thought to be merely subjective sensations. In the Stella C. sittings drops in temperature were recorded on thermometers, and it was found that 'when telekinetic action was particularly strong, the mercury fell many degrees below that recorded at commencement of sitting.'

The sittings took place by the light of 'a 60-watt lamp in an ordinary photographic ruby well-glass,' and Price says that it was possible to see plainly the limbs and features of the sitter. No vestige of fraud has ever been imputed to the medium, who received no payment beyond a rate appropriate to her profession as a hospital nurse and dispenser. The work of Price in other connections has been heavily attacked and, more recently, strongly defended in the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research; whatever his reputation may be as a ghost-hunter, his work on Stella C. is an important document, and his correlation of temperature drop with telekinetic activity was confirmed a year later by Dr Christian Winther, the Danish researcher, in his experiments with another medium, Anna Rasmussen.

In a series of sittings in strong light, starting in 1922, Anna Rasmussen caused one of a pair of pendulums suspended from hooks and enclosed in glass to move, change direction, accelerate or slow down, independently of the other. In 1924 Winther found, like Price, that there was a paranormal drop of temperature correlating with the telekinetic movements.

The last medium of this 'golden age' is Stanislawa Tomzcyk (the Hon. Mrs Everard Feilding), a Polish medium whose phenomena somewhat resemble those of Nina Kulagina, the only modern physical medium to have put herself at the disposal of investigators. Mme Tomzcyk caused small objects, such as matchboxes, to rise up into the air between hands held some few inches away from the object on either side. Four professors of different nationality were entirely satisfied that this was not done with wires, cotton or hair. On the contrary, they asserted that between her two hands ectoplasmic threads (which were photographed) would materialize, and that these 'rigid rays' supported the levitated objects.

Unreliable Observers

It is, of course, possible for four professors to be not so reliable as they seem. Professor J. C.F. Zoellner, of Leipzig University, published a report in 1887 on sittings with the 'slate-writing' medium Henry Slade, in which he pronounced that he, and three other named professors, were all 'perfectly convinced of the reality of the observed facts altogether excluding imposture or prestidigitation.' In a report on Spiritualism published later that year, however, it emerged that 'Zoellner was of unsound mind at the time, and anxious for experimental verification of an already accepted hypothesis; another, Fechner, was partly blind, and believed because of Zoellner's observations; a third, Scheibner, was also afflicted with defective vision, and not entirely satisfied in his own mind as to the phenomena; and a fourth, Weber, was advanced in age, and did not even recognize the disabilities of his associates. None of these men had ever had experiences of this sort before, nor was any one of them acquainted with the ordinary possibilities of deception.'

Enough is known at least about Moses, Crookes, Cox, Barrett, Carington, Richet, Schrenck-Notzing and Harry Price, to name a few, to know that they were not senile, blind or apparently insane at the time when their reports were made. There is never any answer to the assumption that all psychical researchers are fraudulent, except to point out that, up to the moment of death, every important researcher in this field has maintained his belief in the reality of the phenomena reported by him.

Before rejecting the more fantastic reports out of hand, it is worth pausing to consider why researchers, generally anxious to be accepted as sane, careful investigators, put their reputations in jeopardy by issuing reports that are almost bound to be disbelieved. In describing a little materialized woman who danced naked on the palm of her hand before shrinking to nothing, Madame Bisson (the researcher associated with Eva C.) apologetically stated that she reported this astonishing thing because it happened.

The question that is prone to stick in the mind is why physical mediumship appears virtually to have died out in the last 50 years, at least in Europe and the United States. The answer given by Spiritualists is that the powers 'out there' have turned their attention to healing, a sphere in which it is almost impossible to be satisfied that any result is unequivocally paranormal.

It may not be too fanciful to postulate that physical mediumship arises as a result of a psychological state. Abnormal psychology and mediumship are inextricably linked, and there is some reason to suggest that there may be a connection between physical mediumship and sex. In days when it was quite possible for an adolescent to be ignorant of sexual matters that today would be common knowledge among primary schoolchildren, the young may have suffered unexpressed terrors, anxieties and feelings of guilt that had to find expression in some abnormal manner. If this is a well-founded speculation, it might account for the rarity of this form of abnormal expression in these days when the young are encouraged to bring out into the open problems that might have been thrust down into the darkest corner of the mind earlier in the century.

(See also AUTOMATIC ART; HOME; LEONARD; OUIJA BOARDS; PALLADINO; PIPER; PSYCHICAL RESEARCH; PSYCHOKINESIS; SCHNEIDER; SPIRITUALISM; WILLETT.)

R.G. MEDHURST, M.R. BARRINGTON

FURTHER READING: For a valuable and detailed study of mental mediumship with many examples, see W.H. Salter, *Zoar: The Evidence of Psychical Research concerning Survival* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1961); for an authoritative study of the psychology and procedures of various trance mediums, including examples of their utterances which seem to involve paranormal cognition, see C.D. Broad *Lectures on Psychical Research* (International Library of Philosophy and Scientific Method, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); see also Alfred Douglas, *Extrasensory Powers: A Century of Psychical Research* (Gollancz, 1976); Gardner Murphy, *The Challenge of Psychical Research* (Harpers, New York, 1961); Alan Gauld, *Mediumship and Survival* (Heinemann, 1982); H. Hart, *The Enigma of Survival* (Rider 1959); R. Heywood, *The Sixth Sense* (Pan Books, 1966); Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985); Benjamin B. Wolman ed, *Handbook of Parapsychology* (Van Nostrand Rheinhold, 1977).

Psychic News

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Mediums have occasionally produced phenomena, under controlled conditions, for which there is no scientifically orthodox explanation *Top row, left to right* Rudi Schneider: he was able to produce various physical phenomena under stringent control conditions; Eusapia Palladino: although she was detected in fraud on a number of occasions, she was also capable of producing seemingly inexplicable physical phenomena; Anna Rasmussen: intensively investigated in Copenhagen, she was able to influence the movements of pendulums made from a variety of materials; Douglas Johnson, a much-tested London medium *Centre, left to right* Mrs Leonora Piper, an American mental medium who was active at the turn of the 20th century; Kathleen Goligher: she was said to have caused a small table to rise 18 inches in the air during one of her sittings; Pasquale Erto, a Neapolitan physical medium *Left* D. D. Home, one of the most famous of physical mediums *Right* Henry Slade: 'spirit' writing appeared on slates during his seances

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

MEDMENHAM MONKS

THE NOTORIOUS SOCIETY commonly known as the 'Hell-Fire Club' which met at Medmenham Abbey in Buckinghamshire, and perhaps afterwards in the High Wycombe caves, resulted from the meeting of several eccentric minds; but it was also very much a creature of its century. If Satanism was indeed practised by members of the club this was not unique in 18th century Europe. The Age of Reason was also the age of shadows: beside the logical discourses of the philosophers babbled less reputable speculators on man and the universe.

The 'friars' who gathered in the judiciously ruined abbey erected beside the Thames by Sir Francis Dashwood came from the highest reaches of society, and were in one sense merely carrying on the traditions of the early 18th century Hell-Fire clubs of London, with which they have been confused. Such clubs had specialized in the choicer aspects of blasphemy: Philip, Lord Wharton, who was President of one of these societies in 1720 was known to call in London taverns for a 'Holy Ghost pie'. But at Medmenham the debauch was more tasteful, ordered in the Italian fashion then in vogue, and spiced with Devil-worship. The prime movers in the Medmenham brotherhood were all rakes, aesthetes, and politicians; their Satanism was conducted in the most elegant surroundings. Inspired by fashionable visions of gloom, decay, bats and ivy-covered walls, Dashwood had leased Medmenham Abbey and made such alterations – cloisters and a ruined tower among others – as would turn it into his personal palace of delights.

Dashwood found one half of his inspiration in his debauches with a friend of his, Lord Sandwich; the other came from the notably odd personage of George Bubb Dodington. Born plain George Bubb, this gentleman had inherited a large fortune and an ambition to rise in the world. His capacity to fawn and ingratiate himself was matched only by his talent for appearing ridiculous – most notably when he burst his breeches kissing the hand of Queen Charlotte. In the Jacobean house at Hammersmith in London which he named 'La Trappe' after the great Cistercian abbey at Soligny la Trappe in France, Bubb held court: his guests were known as 'monks' and would sometimes dress up in monastic habits.

To this house came Dashwood, who was obviously inspired by the surroundings and atmosphere; here also came others who were to foregather at Medmenham: Paul Whitehead, who had escaped a life of debt by marrying a rich and ugly half-wit; Thomas Potter, the rich son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose debaucheries quickly reduced him to a scurvy-ridden, gouty and palsied wreck, whilst leaving his considerable intelligence unharmed; and Potter's friend, George Selwyn, who had a habit of attending executions disguised as an old lady. Bubb, Dashwood, Sandwich, and Whitehead were all connected with the Opposition party in the House of Commons, as was another member of the Medmenham group, the Marquis of Bute.

From 1750 until 1762 these public figures gathered in Sir Francis Dashwood's ruined abbey for a fortnight each June. With several of the local gentry, they formed a 'Superior Order' of 12, each with an adopted name; Dashwood was 'St Francis'. There was also an 'Inferior Order' of 12, composed of guests and neighbours who were not allowed to take part in the special festivities of the brotherhood.

Only members of the Superior Order were allowed to enter the chapel of Medmenham, where pornographic pictures and parodies of conventional church furniture provided the setting for a rather rudimentary form of Satanic ritual. A new member of the brotherhood might indeed be baptized to Lucifer, and the orthodox liturgy mocked; but how far the ceremonies went in their 'Satanic' practices cannot be discovered.

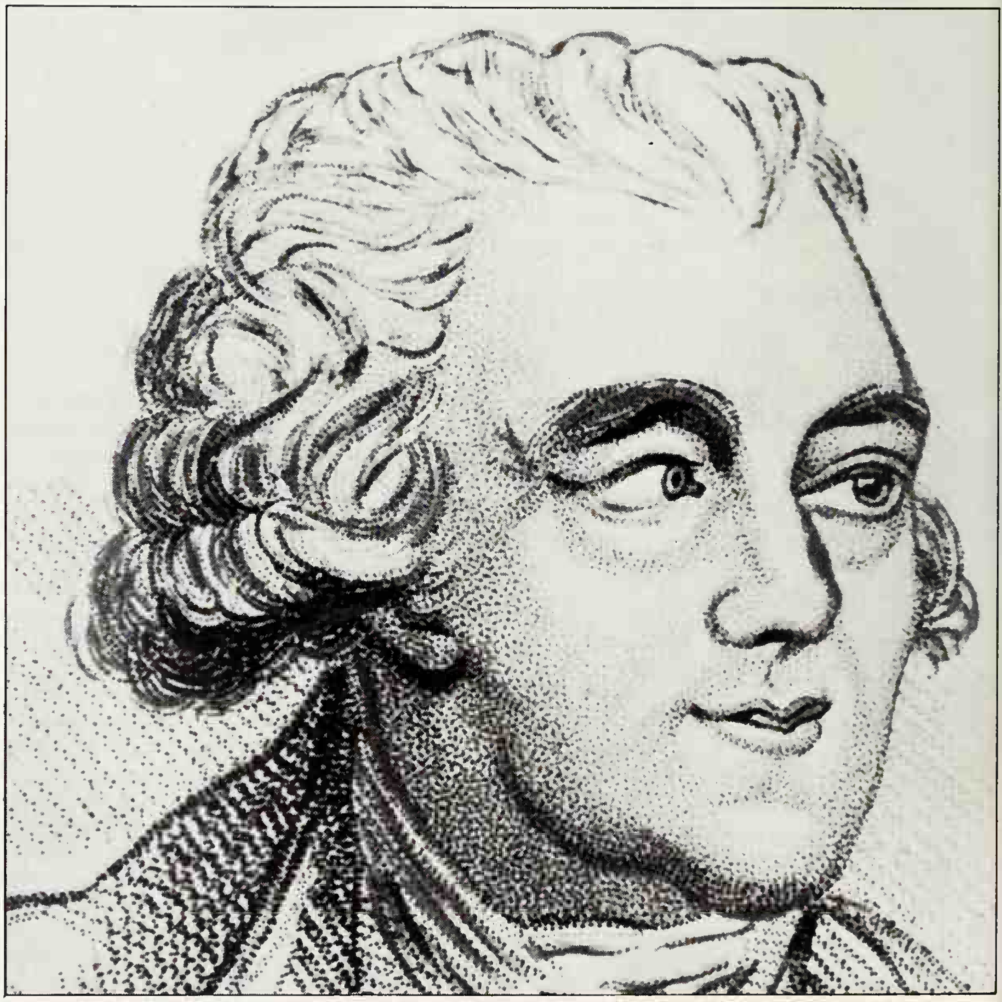
'Divine Milk-Punch'

The escapade lasted for 12 years until the notorious John Wilkes decided to expose the whole apparatus of secrecy surrounding Medmenham. Wilkes, famous for his championship of the mob, had perhaps been less acquiescent than most in the Satanic ritual of 'St Francis'. One day, into the middle of the Satanic ceremony bounded a devil in very truth, and fastened on to Sandwich, who fell to the ground screaming for mercy. It proved to be an ape, which Wilkes had concealed in a box whose gate he could open with a string; the beast had been equipped with horns and a long black cloak.

Whether or not this encouraged enmity between Sandwich and Wilkes, by 1762 the majority of the Medmenham monks were in political power, with Wilkes and his friend Charles Churchill, also a member of the brotherhood, on the other side of the fence. Bute was Prime Minister, the impossible Bubb Dodington was in the Cabinet, and Dashwood was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Wilkes and Churchill exposed the Medmenham proceedings in an issue of the *North Briton*. Medmenham was now an object of curiosity and could no longer be used; and the brotherhood was in any case dispersing. Dashwood tried to resurrect the festivities in the caves under Wycombe Hill, on top of which he built a most secular church, complete with wine bins and surmounted by a golden ball in which he would sit with a bottle of his 'divine milk-punch' and roar parodies of the Psalms.

But age wearied the appetite of the company for diversion; death pruned their numbers. Bubb Dodington died falling down his own stairs. The ghost of Paul Whitehead, former steward to the brotherhood, appeared at West Wycombe Park to presage Dashwood's own death. 'St Francis' was no doubt unconcerned: one of his last acts before he died in 1781 was to publish an abbreviated edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* in collaboration with Benjamin Franklin the American statesman and scientist. His Satanism was in any case more a matter for the sexual pathologist than for the priest.

JAMES WEBB



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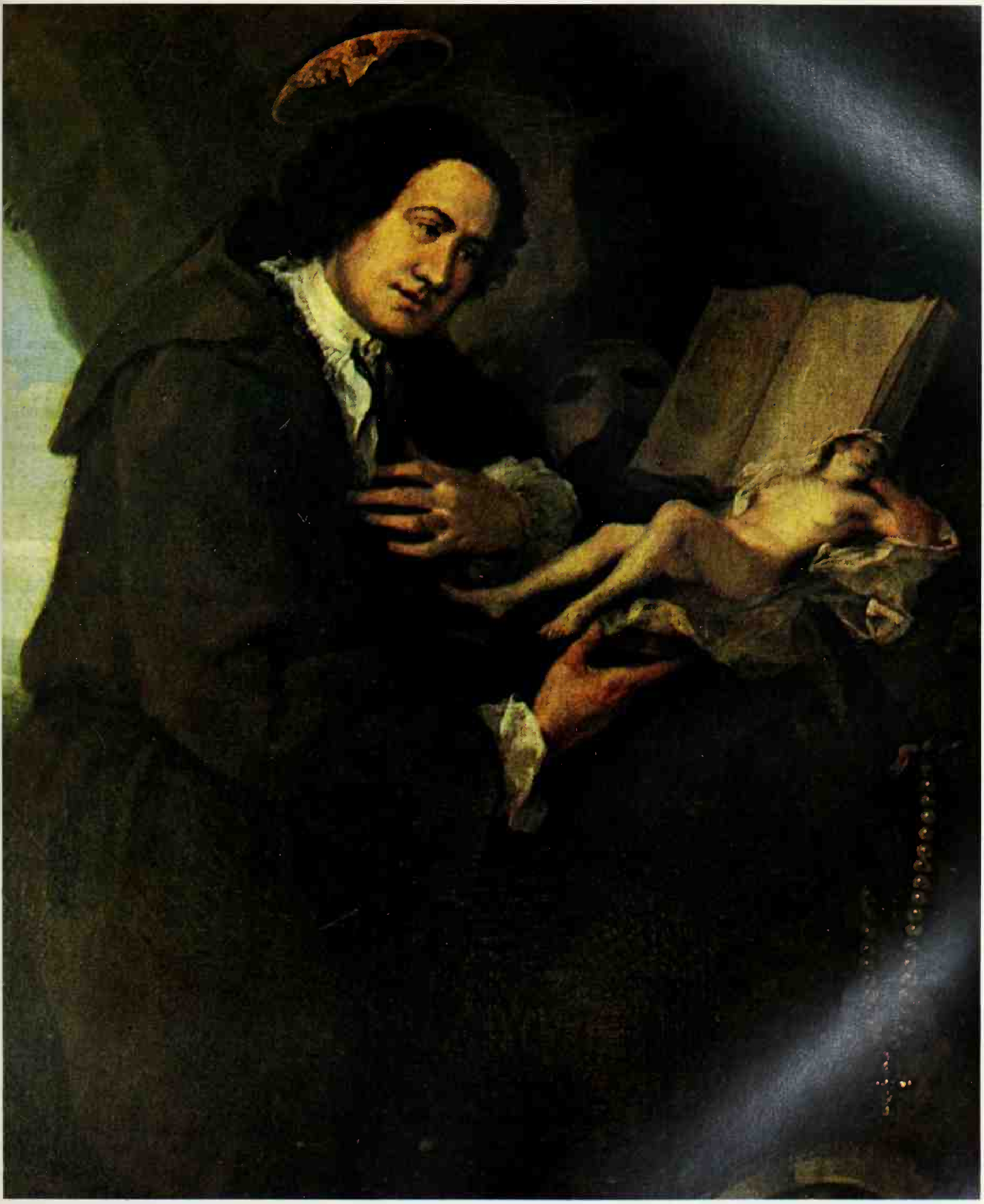

The leading members of the Medmenham brotherhood were rakes, aesthetes and politicians *Left* John Wilkes, a famous figure in 18th century politics, was at one time a member of the club *Above* Sir Francis Dashwood, founder of the brotherhood: painting by Hogarth showing him wearing a monk's habit and kneeling before a figure of Venus

Central to the resurgence of interest in magic and the occult since the 19th century has been the concept of a lost wisdom – a profound and subtle understanding of the universe which our ancestors possessed long ago, but which mankind has forgotten and which orthodox modern science and scholarship deny. Speculation has been fuelled by tantalizing discoveries about the huge stone monuments of prehistoric Europe

MEGALITHIC MYSTERIES

THE STONE CIRCLES and standing stones of Europe – the megaliths, or 'great stones', as they are called – have stood for 3,000 years and more. They go back to a period between roughly 3000 and 1200 BC, and the oldest of them are older than the pyramids of Egypt. They were constructed so long ago that no trustworthy tradition of why and how they were built has survived, but an aura of magic and the uncanny has clung to them down the centuries, with an underlying belief that they enshrined forgotten knowledge and skill, which recent discoveries seem to justify. Britain is particularly rich in these monuments, including the grandest of them all, Stonehenge, and it is investigation of British sites which has mainly carried the study of them forward.

The huge size of these constructions is impressive and significant. At Avebury in Wiltshire, for instance, two separate stone circles were laid out inside an outer circle of almost 100 enormous monoliths, dragged from the nearby downs and placed inside a deep ditch and a massive earth bank of chalk, which would have gleamed a brilliant white when it was new. The complex was approached by a processional avenue of standing stones more than a mile long.

Not many miles away, at Stonehenge, the biggest megaliths not only stand up to 30ft high and weigh up to 50 tons apiece, but they are capped by massive stone lintels, fastened in place with mortice-and-tenon joints. The giant sarsens, or sandstone blocks, at Stonehenge were not found on the spot by the builders. They were dragged there from 20 miles away to the north, on wooden sledges hauled over rollers by teams of men with ropes. Archeologists have demonstrated that the problems of construction can be solved readily enough with the simple tools and equipment available at the time, but why did the builders go to so much trouble?

Temples of the Stars

It has long been recognized that Stonehenge, Avebury and the other stone circles almost certainly had a religious function, as temples of the gods, and it is now widely admitted that they were also built as astronomical observatories. If you stand at the centre of Stonehenge at dawn on Midsummer Day and look towards the ceremonial entrance to the monument, you will see the sun rising impressively over a 35-ton outer pillar called the Heel Stone. This has been known for centuries, but recent surveying has shown that the monument has many other alignments to the sun and the moon. A complicated system of moving markers from one of Stonehenge's surrounding pits to another would have made it possible to predict eclipses of the sun and moon, while alignments with the four Station Stones point to sunrise at the solstices and equinoxes and to important stages in the moon's cycle (see STONEHENGE).

In a book published as long ago as 1906 a distinguished British astronomer and scientist, Sir Norman Lockyer, maintained that Stonehenge and many other stone circles in Britain were orientated to the sun, and aligned on other stars as well, and suggested that they had been designed by 'astronomer-priests'. The obstacle to acceptance of the theory, however, was that archeologists could not credit barbarous Stone Age Britain with the requisite knowledge, sophistication and skill.

In the 1930s, however, an academic engineering specialist, Professor Alexander Thom, became interested after noticing that the megalithic complex at Callanish in the Outer Hebrides was orientated due north. For years he spent his holidays surveying hundreds of stone circles and established that they were all astronomically aligned with surprising accuracy. They appeared to have been planned for precise observation of the sun and the moon, and to allow the prediction of eclipses of the moon, and their design implied a remarkable mastery of geometry. He hailed the construction of the enormous complex at Carnac in Brittany as a feat which 'any engineer at any time in the world's history would have been proud to achieve.'

The fact that Professor Thom published his results at first in specialist journals of unimpeachable obscurity did him no harm with academics and his book on *Megalithic Sites in Britain*, which came out in 1967, caused a fundamental change in archeological thinking. It began to be accepted that the Stone Age temples had been designed and staffed by astronomer-priests, who had enjoyed a far higher level of knowledge than they had previously been given credit for, if not necessarily on quite as sophisticated a level as Thom's findings at first suggested.

Besides the stone circles, there are thousands of isolated standing stones. Some of them appear to be markers for sight-lines from the circles. Some are arranged in rows in straight lines, which may lead to burial sites, suggesting perhaps a pathway for the dead. Other stones could have been route markers or boundary markers. Some may have been phallic symbols connected with fertility rites. Legends which link them with giants, the fairy folk or other uncanny beings may be distant memories of the awe in which the original builders were held.

The Right Time

It seems likely that the great megalithic complexes were connected with the need to determine an accurate calendar, to fix the right times for planting seeds and breeding cattle. Their huge size, however, indicates that there was more to them than practical considerations. There is no need to build something on the scale of Stonehenge or Avebury to study the stars and determine the calendar. The sites have the air of sacred places and the concern with the sun and the moon which their alignments imply suggests that religion, science and philosophy went hand in hand to their creation. The march of the seasons and the cycle of life and death on earth – the birth, growth, death and rebirth of crops, animals and human beings – have been linked since time immemorial with the apparent strengthening and weakening of the sun and the waxing and waning of the moon as it goes through its eternal cycle in the sky.

The megalithic temples were probably

The midsummer sun rises behind the standing stones of Callanish on the island of Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland

Gerald Ponting/Janet & Colin Bord

used for rituals intended to honour the gods and secure the fertility of crops and beasts. They also enshrined the astronomer-priests' understanding of the fundamental order of the universe, and they may have been constructed in all their weight and massiveness in the belief that they would magically help to preserve that order on the earth.

Earth Magic

Speculation about the true function of the megalithic monuments, however, has gone considerably further than this. The idea that the Stone Age priests had an understanding of nature denied to modern man has proved powerfully attractive and many people believe that the stone circles and standing stones were constructed to harness natural energies in the ground. The principal sites are thought of as nodes in a grid or network of 'earth energies' or geomagnetic impulses, linked together by invisible lines of force called leys (see LEY LINES).

Dowsers with rods and pendulums have registered subtle energies at the sites, which they claim are frequently associated with underground streams and veins of water, and with geological faults. A current of energy is said to spiral up the standing stones, gaining strength as it rises, until at the top it may cause the fingers to tingle when the stone is touched. It is suggested that this flow of energy strengthens and diminishes as the moon waxes and wanes.

The spiral is a pattern commonly carved on megaliths (see MAZE), and theorists have suggested that the Stone Age priests, living far closer to nature than modern, industrialized Western man and possessed of formidable psychic powers, understood the subtle earth energies, made use of them and sited their major observatory-temples at nodal points on the grid. Standing stones have been compared to acupuncture needles, used to tap and adjust the flow of earth energy as the acupuncturist's needles tap and regulate the human body's flow of Chi (see ACUPUNCTURE; CHI).

Some dowsers believe that standing stones were put up to mark points on the earth's surface where magnetic force was exceptionally strong and might have been used for healing purposes. In folklore, water which had touched the stones of Stonehenge was credited with healing powers, and there are other old traditions in Britain which link standing stones with fertility. Were they phallic symbols, perhaps, erected to penetrate the Earth Mother in a piece of permanent fertility magic?

T.C. Lethbridge (see LETHBRIDGE) and other dowsers noted that they sometimes received a shock, rather like a bee sting, from standing stones. Lethbridge experienced electric shocks when investigating the Merry Maidens stone circle in Cornwall. The stones of this circle, according to an old legend, are maidens who were turned to stone for the sin of dancing on a Sunday, and the same story is told of other stone circles. Lethbridge suggested that 'bio-electronic' energy, possibly given off by frenzied religious dancing at the site, was stored in the stones. He linked this energy with the concept of *mana* among the peoples of the Pacific islands – a kind of magic power inherent in people, animals and all the phenomena of nature, animate and inanimate (see MANA).

At Carnac, in western Brittany, broad avenues of carefully aligned megaliths lead for over half a mile to a gigantic fallen menhir, stone tombs and burial mounds

Anthony Weir/Janet & Colin Bord

The Sons of God

A linked line of speculation has connected megalithic sites with visitors from outer space in ancient times. Lethbridge suggested that megaliths might have been put up as guidemarks for spacecraft coming from other planets or possibly other galaxies, which could 'home' onto the energy radiating from the stones. He detected this behind the curious legend in Genesis of the sons of God desiring the beautiful daughters of men and fathering children on them. 'Was there a long time ago, perhaps five thousand or more years it might have been,' he asked in *The Legend of the Sons of God*, 'a series of exploratory visits to this world from another? Did they have considerable contact with the people then living on earth, including some degree of intermarriage? Did the explorers persuade the natives to help them in setting up direction beacons and similar constructions in return for being taught how to work metals, practise agriculture and even build primitive towns? Then, for some unknown reason, did it all come to an end, leaving some degree of hybrid population behind it?'

Other writers, too, have linked megalithic sites with visiting astronauts, suggesting that UFOs fly along ley lines to draw on the earth energy. This type of theory is, in effect, a throwback to the earlier belief of mainstream archeologists that Stone Age mankind could not have possessed the knowledge and skill to construct the megalithic observatory-temples. The necessary knowledge is here credited to advanced beings from outer space, who taught benighted mankind how to build the monuments, but the theory has not worn well.

An alternative explanation, which looks at the matter the other way round, is that UFOs are really 'earth lights', or pulses of earth energy given off along ley lines. It is argued that stories about UFOs are often associated with megalithic sites, not because the spacecraft are real, but because ideas about them and alien visitors of various kinds are set off in the human mind by the same earth energies which are linked with the sites (see UFOS).

The difficulty with all these theories is the lack of clinching evidence. It is a fascinating field, but in the end most of the speculations about the megaliths have still to be classified as 'non-proven'.

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Behind the old Melanesian way of life, with its headhunting, cannibalism and human sacrifice, was belief in the supernatural power known as mana; even today, magical ways of thinking have survived the islanders' contact with 'civilization'

MELANESIA

A GROUP OF PACIFIC ISLANDS lying south of the equator, Melanesia includes New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, and the Admiralty, Solomon, Santa Cruz, New Caledonia and Loyalty islands. In this area it is possible to pass, in not much more than an hour's flying time, from a centre where most traditional beliefs have been discarded for a generation or more to an outpost among people whose life has been only superficially influenced by contact with Europeans. In discussing the Melanesians, therefore, it should be remembered that the use of either the past or the present tense can be misleading: what is true of one section of a tribe may no longer be true of another.

When first encountered by Europeans, the Melanesians' material technology was on a level equivalent to the Neolithic period of Europe. They used tools of stone or shell, finished by grinding. Today, many rural people still live by gardening, growing mainly tropical root crops. Social and political units are usually small and democratic, hereditary chieftainship being unusual. Warfare used to be endemic, but was successfully suppressed by the colonial authorities. Apart from these few generalizations, what is most common to Melanesia is its remarkable cultural and linguistic diversity.

Afterlife Inside a Shark

The Melanesian world is thickly populated by spirits, which are everywhere, in trees, river pools, in the sea, in animals, and which affect human life at every turn. They are of two kinds: the ghosts of the dead, and spirits that have never inhabited human bodies. There is no concept of great gods in charge of activities such as fishing, craftsmanship or war, still less of an ultimate Creator. Religion is a strictly practical matter and consists basically in making contact with a spirit who will befriend and help a human. The two sorts of spirits exist side by side, but their relative importance varies. Ancestral ghosts are always venerated, though in some parts it is the spirits of non-human origin that have the real importance. But spirits can move from one group to the other, for after a time the human origin of a powerful ghost may be forgotten.

In the central and southern Solomon Islands important ghosts, called *tindalo*, often enter an animal, and the place associated with the creature becomes sacred. A man may announce during his life what creature he will enter, sharks being especially favoured. A notorious man-eating shark may become associated with a famous ancestor, and a man who escapes from it will be thrown back out of fear and respect for the spirit. Sea spirits are believed to shoot the living with magical arrows in the form of flying fish, and a man struck by a fish as it skims above the surface will therefore be likely to die. On the other hand sea spirits send shoals of bonito (a fish which is an important item of diet) and help the living in other ways. For this reason, in the Solomon and Santa Cruz groups figures of ancestral spirits often have some attributes of fish or are depicted holding them.

Spirits are much concerned with the observance of custom, any breach of which angers them and brings misfortune to the people. The fear of such consequences forms the sanction which upholds native morality and the delicate balance of society, and its breakdown has been one of the most unfortunate results of European contact.

At the basis of Melanesian religion and magic is the concept of mana (see MANA), supernatural power which has been compared to a charge of electricity; although it can be controlled and directed to human ends it is always dangerous. Inanimate objects can have it, possession of it being indicated in many cases by an unusual appearance or quality. Men too have mana: outstanding success or exceptional force of personality prove that it is present. This power, however, always derives ultimately from a spirit, at least in eastern Melanesia; it seems to do so less clearly in New Guinea.

The belief that mana can be transferred helps to explain three practices which occurred widely though sporadically in Melanesia: headhunting, cannibalism and human sacrifice. Headhunting often seems to be connected with the notion of acquiring mana from an enemy group. The Marindanim of southern West Irian (Indonesian New Guinea) believe the capture of a head to be necessary before a boy can be given his adult name, though on the other hand the peoples living near the estuary of the River Fly, not far away in Papua, state that the head is regarded as no more than a mere trophy (see also HEAD). Cannibalism seems to have a similar ritual basis, not always acknowledged; but the fact that peoples as far apart as the Kukukuku of New Guinea and the Fijians believe that it is dangerous to handle human flesh, and used special implements when eating it, shows that it is not regarded merely as another sort of meat.

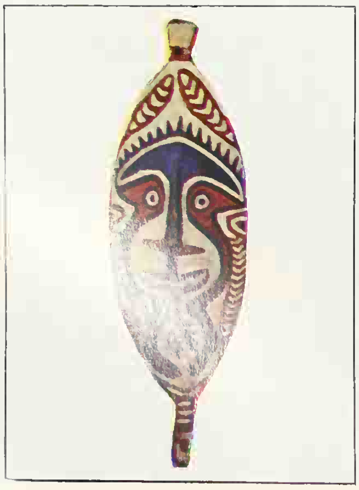
Human sacrifice was less general. Where it occurred, as in the Solomons and the New Hebrides, it was usually connected with an occasion on which mana was required, such as the launching of a war canoe or the performance of the culminating ceremony in a great cycle.

An object which is dangerous because it has mana is taboo. The place associated with a spirit is therefore taboo, or a chief, by virtue of his mana, can impose a taboo on the produce of a garden or the use of a certain path.

Except in Fiji there are no orders of priests. A man who has a special relationship with a powerful spirit may profit considerably from the demand for his services, but he continues to lead a normal life as a gardener, fisherman or craftsman. An important element in his expertise is often a knowledge of the correct form of words to use in invocation of the spirit; and in connection with the invocation small sacrifices or offerings are frequently made.

Masked Spirits

In most parts of Melanesia there are, in addition to such personal approaches to individual spirits, ceremonies in which the whole community participates. These are often to honour a group or class of spirits. Among the Elema at the head of the Papuan Gulf such ceremonies formed a cycle which took years to complete. Masks of painted bark cloth represented the spirits, and the celebrations included feasting, drumming and dancing. The people of northern New Ireland periodically perform ceremonies in honour of the recently dead, for which elaborate masks and carvings



Axel Poignant/Australia Museum

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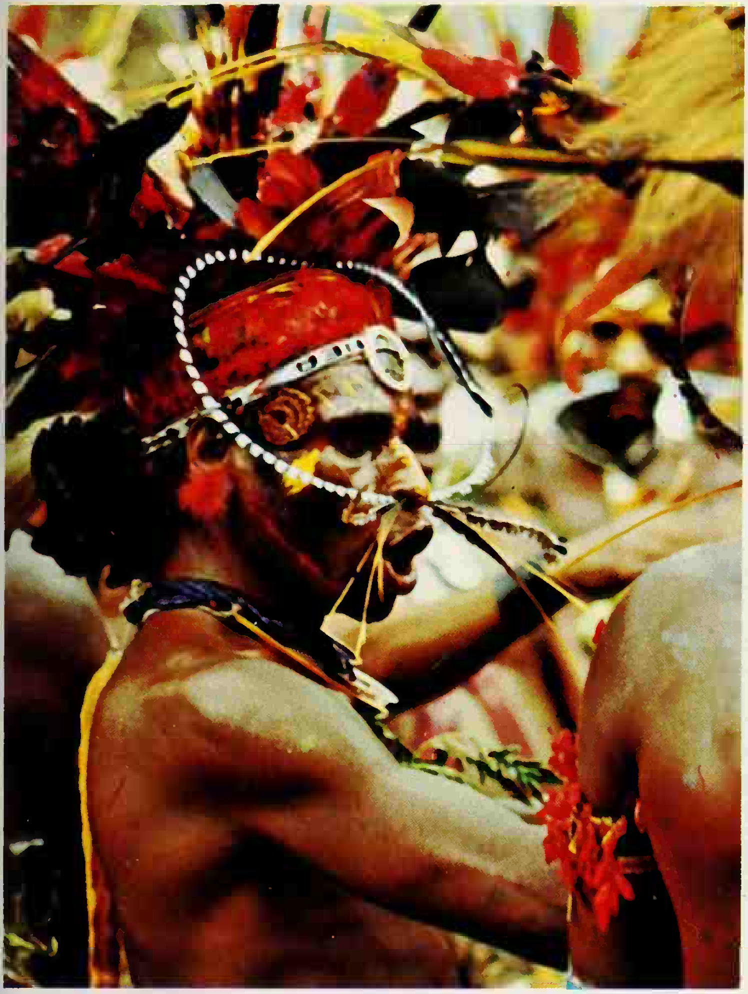

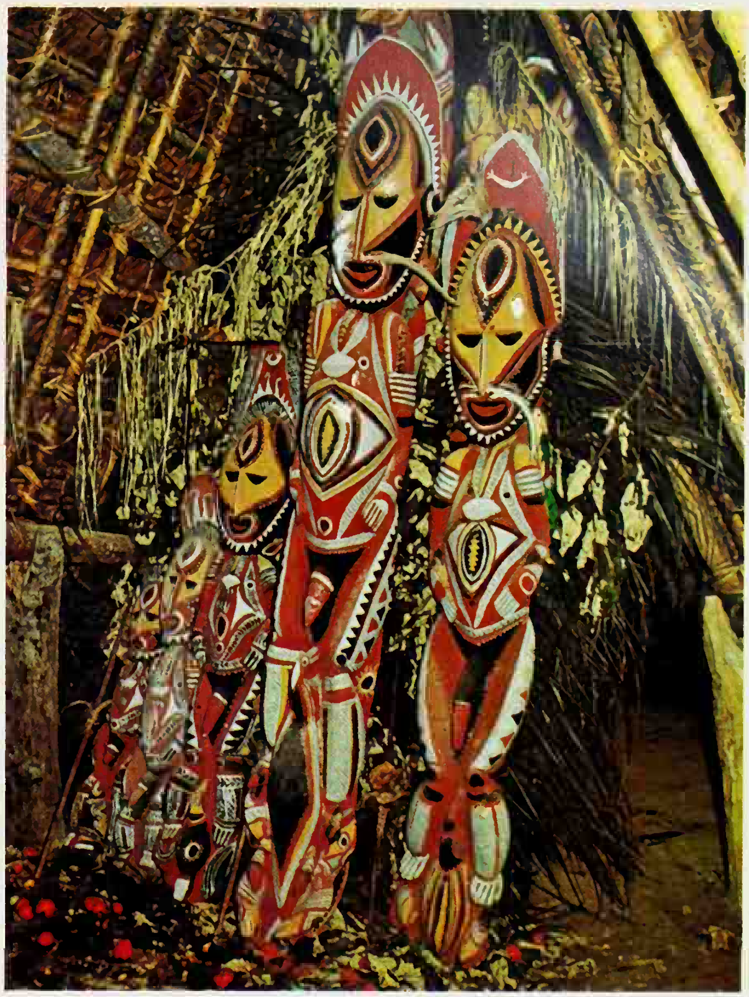

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Melanesian religion consists principally of making contact with spirits who will help and befriend humans; the approach may be made by an individual, or ceremonies may be held in which whole communities participate *Facing page, left to right* Ancestral tablet or board found in a men's cult house in the Papuan Gulf region: ghosts of the ancestors are always venerated; New Guinea cult figure: ceremonial dancers hold these in their hands; ornament for a canoe prow, representing a guardian spirit: malanggan, an elaborate carving used in ceremonies held in honour of the recently dead *Above* Chimbu man in a feather headdress takes part in a ritual dance before visiting a pig-killing ceremony *Above right* Carved and painted figures representing clan spirits, in a men's ceremonial house in New Guinea

known as *malanggan* are prepared.

Masks representing spirits are made in many parts of Melanesia. Their significance, like their style, varies from place to place. Often they are worn only by initiates and may not be seen by others. Women and uninitiated boys sometimes believe (ostensibly, at least) that the masked figures are in fact spirits, or that the sounds of special instruments such as bamboo flutes are their voices. The men, though conscious of the deception, yet feel a mystical identification with the spirits which they represent.

Initiation rites are widespread. In some places initiation is undergone by all boys at a certain age, usually about that of puberty. In others there is a series of ceremonies. The rites admit boys into the responsibilities and privileges of manhood. The secrets of the cults and of the cult objects are revealed to them, the myths are recounted, food taboos may be lifted, and where the men's house is an institution boys move to it and leave the company of women; for there is often a feeling that femaleness is dangerous to men. The rites often include physical ordeals, such as circumcision, the piercing of the nasal septum (the cartilaginous division of the nose), varieties of homosexual practice and beating with stinging or thorny plants. In parts of eastern Melanesia initiation is not automatic. It may be by purchase, and then confers privileges. Sometimes the initiate is regarded as being ritually reborn, and his rebirth may be enacted.

The distinction between religion and magic is often hard to draw in Melanesia. The Rev. R. H. Codrington, a missionary in eastern Melanesia a century ago and a very acute and accurate observer, has discussed the way in which a prayer, the outcome of which is uncertain, merges into a spell (a magical procedure) when it is believed that the words automatically produce the result. Magic permeates Melanesian life, and belief in it is very persistent, surviving conversion to Christianity and even a high degree of acculturation.

Magic is white or black – beneficent magic or sorcery – but here too the distinction is not always clear. Harmful magic directed against a fellow-clansman is bad, but directed against a man of a hostile tribe it is wholly admirable. Sorcerers are greatly feared. Their methods vary in different parts of Melanesia. As a generalization it is probably true to say that the sort of magic which depends on obtaining some substance closely connected with the victim – nail parings, excreta, a morsel of food – is more typical of eastern Melanesia. A form widely feared in the northern parts of New Guinea is called, in pidgin, *sangguma*. It is believed that the sorcerer has the power to introduce a sharp object into the victim's body without leaving a visible wound. The Tifalmin, near the source of the Sepik River, believe that the sangguma men – always from another tribe – shoot their victims with magical arrows. If the arrows are not removed by an expert, who works by manipulation and massage, the victim dies. In the Banks Islands a length of bamboo was filled with magical ingredients, including a relic of a dead man, and directed at an enemy, the end being covered with a thumb until he came into view.

Beneficent magic can serve many purposes: healing, promoting success in important activities, averting or bringing rain. Healing procedures can be, from a European viewpoint, both medical and magical. The Tifalmin massage a painful place with the flat bone of a river turtle which is found only at lower altitudes. The bone is a magical object, and the treatment is accompanied by muttered spells, but clearly the massage itself may be beneficial. Every Tifalmin man possesses charms which bring luck in his activities. Nearly all are obtained by trade with peoples who live in the

foothills. These charms are of kinds which do not occur in the Tifalmin valley: fossils are in great demand, and also bones of animals not found in the mountains. The power of the dead is illustrated by the practice of temporarily burying in a garden, to ensure a good crop, the jaw bone of an ancestor who was a famous gardener.

First Men Resembled Pigs

The differences in belief and in social and political structure between Melanesia and Polynesia are reflected in their mythologies. Some resemblances to the Polynesian system can be traced in eastern Melanesia, but Melanesian myths contain nothing like the creative activities of the Polynesian pantheon (see POLYNESIA), although it is true that certain heroes of the Banks Islands and Vanuatu – Qat and Tagaro – stand head and shoulders above the minor spirits.

According to one account Qat at first made men and pigs in the same form, but later made pigs go on all fours and men upright to distinguish between them. In another he made men and women of wood and brought them to life by dancing in front of them. Yet Qat himself had a mother and companions. Tagaro, who resembles Qat in many ways, is probably the Polynesian god Tangaroa adapted to a Melanesian cosmogony.

There are some resemblances between Melanesian and Australian views of the origin of things, but their significance should not be over-estimated. Like the Australian aborigines, many Melanesians believe in a time before men existed when supernatural beings were active, often forming the natural features seen today (see AUSTRALIA). Totemism, so highly developed in Australia, is more vaguely conceived in Melanesia, but there are many traces of it.

Many stories concern the origin of men. In some New Guinea myths the first people came out of a tree or from the ground. Sometimes the ‘first man’ finds women on earth, or stories of the ‘first people’ refer to other people apparently already existing – an inconsistency which does not worry the tellers, for the myths really explain the origin of a clan or a tribe rather than of all mankind, a reflection of the fragmentation and isolation of many Melanesian groups. Peoples living as far apart as central New Guinea and the Solomon Islands have stories of descent from snake-ancestors, or from women who married snakes.

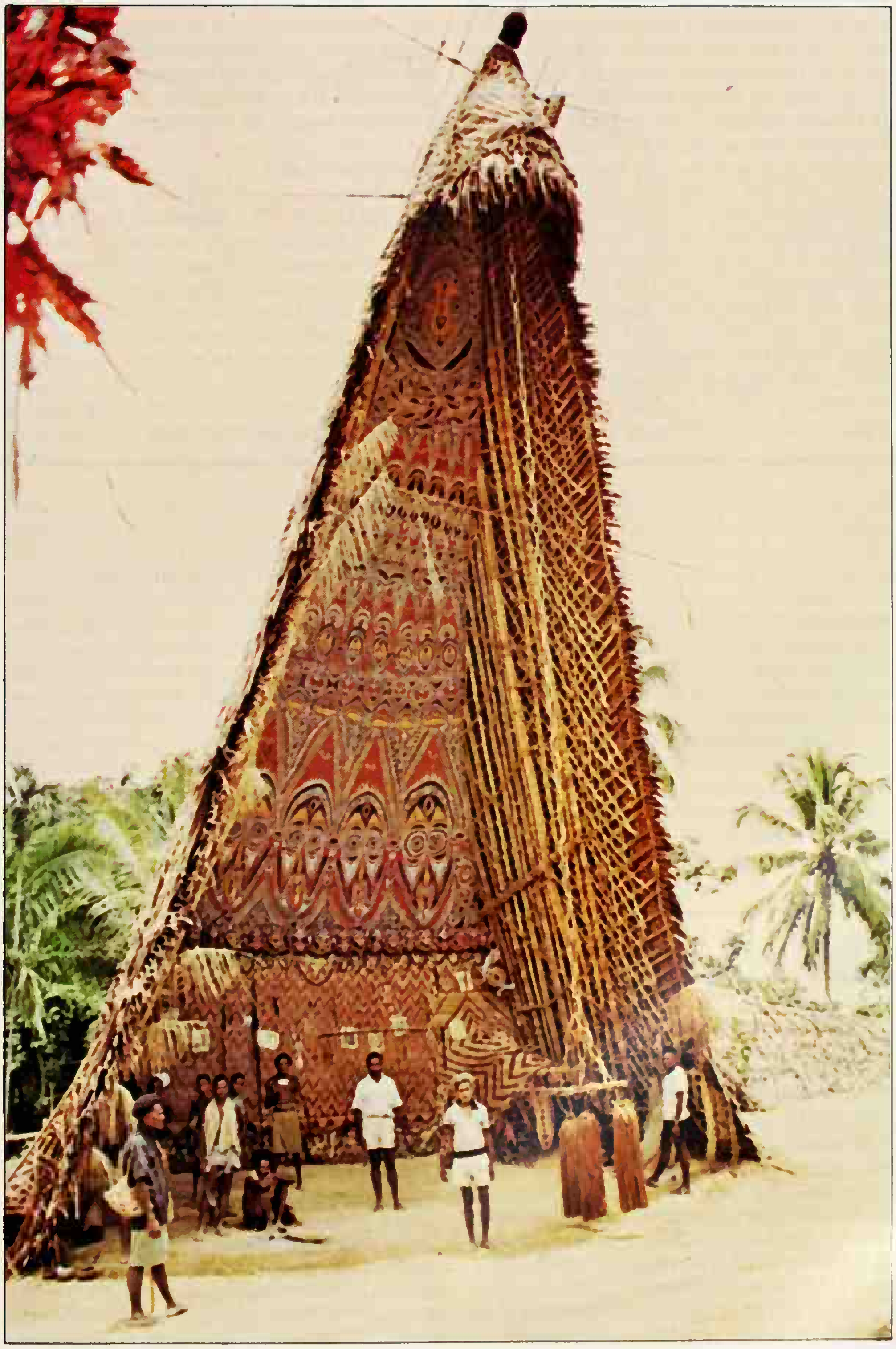
Myths concerning the release of the sea from the ground and the separation of the lands are widely-spread. Often the sea burst out as the result of the foolishness, curiosity or greed of someone who failed to do as instructed.

A number of stories centre round the origin of death, for it is widely believed that at one time people lived for ever. A common group of tales, current as far apart as New Britain and Vanuatu, tells that once people sloughed their skins when they grew old, and appeared young again. For various reasons a woman re-assumed her old skin, in one version because her child did not recognize her and cried; and ever since then people have died.

It is believed everywhere that the soul or spirit survives after death, though it may be only for a time. Usually there is a land of the dead, on a distant island or mountain or under the ground, and there is often a prescribed route which the dead must follow. Commonly they have to pass a spirit guardian who tests them in various ways. If they fail to satisfy him or outwit him they may be destroyed and cease to exist.

The destination of the dead does not depend on their moral conduct during life. There is no equivalent to heaven and hell. What matters is the performance of rituals by surviving relatives, the observance of custom, the status of the dead man. If he was a great warrior, an orator, a leader, people will remember him and will call on him for help, and he will survive in the spirit world. If he was a nonentity in life he will be a nonentity after death and will soon disappear. In Malaita the ghosts of such people turn into ants' nests which are eaten by the great ghosts, but when those latter are finally forgotten they too turn into ants' nests and are eaten.

Left Beneficent magic in Melanesia can serve many purposes, such as promoting success in important activities, bringing rain, or healing the sick; from a European point of view healing procedures can combine both medical and magical elements: medicine-man treating a patient ***Right*** Cult house decorated with magical objects including chains, tassels and the figures of birds



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Consumer Goods from Spirits

No account of Melanesian religion would be complete without some mention of 'cargo cults' (see CARGO CULTS). Such cults have arisen all over the world but they have been more fully recorded, and are perhaps more common, in Melanesia than elsewhere. They seem to arise when contact between a technologically sophisticated culture and a less materially developed one has been too sudden, and the influence of the former too powerful, for the latter to assimilate and adapt to changed patterns. The cargo cult is in the nature of a counter-attack, an assertion of native pride and values against the intruder, but incorporating acquired knowledge and ideas.

To many locals, the wealth and power of Europeans proved that the Christian god was a more powerful spirit than any native one, and many Melanesians were converted because they believed that they would then share the good things which Europeans had in such abundance. They were disappointed. Few consumer goods are manufactured in the islands. Europeans, as Melanesians saw them, did no work but received inexhaustible supplies of goods which came by ship or later by aircraft (hence the term 'cargo'). It seemed obvious that these goods were sent by the spirits. But why were they sent only to Europeans? Because Europeans had by some means obtained control of goods which were meant to be shared by all. Old myths adapted, or new myths based on old beliefs, sometimes provided explanations of how this could have happened.

So prophets arose, preaching that the people should have their fair share of the riches provided by the spirits or the ancestors, and telling what they should do to obtain them. Many have been men with some mission education, or who have served as policemen or plantation labourers. Many cults owe much, at least superficially, to Christianity. They have taken various forms. Sometimes customary law has been deliberately set aside. Property has been declared common, sexual restrictions abolished, traditional leaders ignored, sacred objects destroyed. Pigs have been killed and gardens laid waste in expectation of the imminent arrival of a 'cargo'. Ecstatic possession, speaking with tongues, and visions have been common features. There has been some violence, but fortunately little loss of life. Undoubtedly mass hysteria has been a major factor, and undoubtedly certain men have manipulated the movements for their own ends, but the sincerity of most of the adherents cannot be doubted.

'Marching Rule'

The message of most of these cults has had a political edge. The 'Marching Rule' of the Solomon Islands, which arose after the war as a direct result of wartime disruption (though it has its origins in earlier cults), became a nationalist and revolutionary movement which nevertheless retained millenarian elements. For a time it controlled large areas.

Taking a long view, these cults can be regarded as the growing pains of a new form of Melanesian society. From a shorter view they reflect an unfortunate insensitivity on the part of some Europeans to the feelings of peoples whose world has collapsed around them. Perhaps the fact that there has not been more violence speaks well for both parties. (See also NEW GUINEA.)

B.A.L. CRANSTONE

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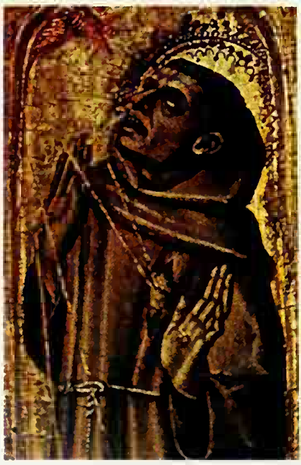
Mendicants

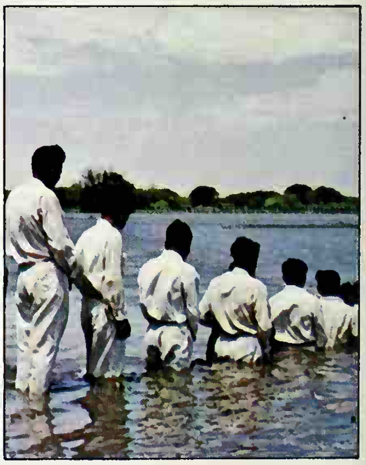
Holy beggars: from the Latin verb *mendicare* 'to beg': in Christianity, certain orders of Friars who live solely on alms; they are sometimes known as Begging Friars, and include such orders as the Franciscans, Augustines, Carmelites and Dominicans; they take a vow of absolute poverty, renouncing all possessions and refusing to handle money.



Samuel H. Kress Collection/Portland Art Museum

Mennonites

A Protestant sect, originating in German-speaking parts of Europe in the early 16th century; named after its founder Menno Simons; many of its followers were forced by persecution to seek refuge in Russia, and later in the United States, Canada and South America; a pacifist sect, they follow the simple principles of the Bible and practise adult baptism; the Old Amish, a branch of the Mennonites, still retain many 17th century customs and mannerisms.



Dr H. Hack

MEN IN BLACK

ONE OF THE CURIOUS BY-PRODUCTS of the developing interest in UFOs during the 1950s and 60s was the regularly reported phenomenon of the 'men in black' (see UFOS).

Typically, an observer who claimed the sighting of a UFO would submit a report of his (or her) experience to one or other of the organizations concerned with collating such reports or, occasionally, to an official bureau; he or she would not have mentioned the matter to the media, or to more than one or two close friends.

Within a few days, the observer would be visited by a team of three men, dressed in the dark suits, plain white shirts with plain dark ties, and black hats favoured, in the popular imagination, by members of the FBI and other government organizations – they were described as 'dressed like funeral directors'. They would sometimes make a prior telephone call to establish that the observer was alone, and arrive silently in an elderly but immaculate black Cadillac, its plates bearing a registration that could not be checked in any records.

The facial features and complexions of these men would be described later by the observers as 'foreign': they were either pale or deeply tanned, and some appeared to be wearing lipstick, while their hair, if they removed their hats, was either non-existent, or thin and irregular. They walked in a curiously disjointed manner; their voices were unnatural in timbre; and they sometimes complained that their strength was fading, and that they must leave at once.

The message of all these strange visitors was the same. The person visited, who had reported UFO phenomena, must immediately cease talking about the matter, destroy all records (including photographs) of the observation, and on no account discuss this unexpected visit. Frequently there were dire threats of what would happen to the observer, or to any other members of the family, if these orders were not obeyed.

Although there is, of course, no way of telling whether anybody obeyed these orders to the letter, a number of people disregarded them, and in due course – either within a few days or after the passage of years – reported their experience of the mysterious visit. (None, apparently, ever suffered the punishment with which they were threatened.) For this reason (if for no other) it is impossible to be sure that these are not 'copycat' reports.

There are, however, many significant differences in detail. In mid-September 1976, for example, Dr Herbert Hopkins, a 58-year-old physician and practising medical hypnotist, was engaged in the investigation of a reported UFO incident in Maine. One evening, he has said, when his wife and children were out of the house, he received a telephone call from a man who said that he was vice-president of the New Jersey UFO Research Organization, and that he would like to discuss the case.

Dr Hopkins agreed, and immediately after, on opening the back door of his home, was surprised to find a man already climbing the porch steps. 'I saw no car, and even if he did have a car he could not possibly have gotten to my house that quickly from any phone,' he later remarked.

The man was dressed in the usual black suit and hat, the suit unwrinkled and the trousers sharply creased. When he removed his hat he was seen to be completely hairless: not only bald, but without eyebrows or lashes. His skin was white, but his lips bright red and, when he later brushed his mouth with the grey gloves he was wearing, Dr Hopkins observed that the gloves appeared to be smeared thickly with lipstick.

The two discussed the UFO incident for some time, and the visitor told him that he must erase all tapes of hypnotic sessions he had held in connection with it. Then he remarked that Dr Hopkins had two coins in his pocket – which was indeed the case – and asked him for one. He held it in his hand, and it vanished. 'Neither you nor anyone else on this plane will ever see that coin again,' he said. The speech of the man in black appeared to be slowing down. He rose unsteadily to his feet and said 'My energy is running low – must go now – goodbye', and walked uncertainly to the door. Dr Hopkins saw a bright light shining in the driveway, which he assumed to be the visitor's car, but he neither saw nor heard it drive away.

A few days later, on 24 September, Dr Hopkins's son John and daughter-in-law Maureen allegedly received a visit from two people, a man and a woman. Both were in their mid-thirties, but dressed in curiously old-fashioned clothes, and both walked with very short steps, leaning forward as though afraid of falling.

The two strangers asked a number of questions about the married couple's domestic habits, while at the same time the man was fondling his female companion, and asked if he was doing it correctly. When John Hopkins left the room for a moment, the man asked Maureen 'how she was made', and whether she had any nude photographs of herself.

Soon after this, the couple rose to leave. The man was between the woman and the door, and she asked John: 'Please move him, I can't move him myself.' The man then left suddenly, followed by the woman. Both walked 'in straight lines', and neither said goodbye.

This is just one of a considerable number of reports that have puzzled investigators. Experts in folklore and the history of witchcraft have drawn interesting parallels between these incidents and earlier stories of the appearance of the Devil, who was often described as a tall man dressed in black (see DEVIL). Although the men in black – referred to by collectors of UFO reports as MIB – are usually associated with these particular phenomena, they have also been recorded in connection with alleged sightings of monsters and other non-human entities. The subject has excited interest among psychologists, and many symptoms of contemporary paranoia are exhibited by those who would otherwise laugh at any suggestion that the Devil exists. The American Tony Kimery, for instance, wrote in 1970:

> The mysterious MIB and the entire collection of their thugs, henchmen, and highly trained intelligence officers, are a big part of the complex UFO phenomena. It is known that projects by them are now under way for the complete control of...political, financial, religious and scientific institutions. They – the MIB – have a very long background and history that stretches back for centuries, indicating a massive build-up of concentration to where it is today.

(See also URBAN MYTHS.)

MENSTRUATION

BELIEFS IN THE HARMFUL POTENCY of a menstruating woman are common in one form or another all over the globe. In country parts of Europe to this day, girls are taught by their mothers not to attempt to make mayonnaise or jam during menstruation, for it is thought that the eggs will certainly curdle and the jam refuse to set. In the Kasai, part of the Congo, a woman believes that if she were to enter the forest during her monthly period, the men's hunting would fail.

Even more widespread in Africa is the idea that at such times a woman must not stir the cooking pot or poke the fire, lest anyone eating the food cooked on it should fall ill. These are straightforward magical ideas, and should be interpreted in the same spirit as other magical ideas which suppose that normal bodily states are dangerously contagious.

When dangerous magical powers are supposed to inhere in the body, it is usually not difficult to recognize the deep concerns which the beliefs underline. If contagious magic is associated with the reproductive functions, it is very likely that sexual relationships are the object of concern. Since there are very few societies in which there is no attempt to regularize sexual behaviour, so there are very few in which menstruation is not surrounded with magical beliefs. The onset of puberty opens the period of sexual maturity. Menstruation is the sign that a girl has reached the age of child-bearing. Wherever there are people who attach considerable importance to the bearing of children, their interest is naturally focused on physical maturity.

We may like to think that, in the more highly-developed countries, the treatment we give to physiological puberty is entirely scientific and objective, but much of it is purely ceremonial, intended to teach the child her adult role and to impress her responsibilities on her mind. In the same way the female puberty rituals of tribal society, together with their magical ideas, are all part of the local feminine mystique.

A Wide Range of Tribal Reactions

Women who read this may remember the secrecy and embarrassment with which this particular fact of life was revealed to them. They may even have wished that they could have grown up in the carefree innocence of a primitive society where bodily functions are taken naturally. In fact, they would have had to pick their tribe very carefully. There are some in which there is no celebration of a girl's coming to womanhood. Others have very uncomfortable arrangements, some stressing the dangers to the girl, others turning the event into a long and difficult session of lessons and examinations.

The private instruction given to their daughters by American and European mothers might come somewhere near the middle of a scale we could draw of tribal reactions, which can vary from joyful congratulation, through solemn teaching to intense preoccupation with danger.

People's ideas about menstruation are part and parcel of their general ideas about how the relations between the sexes should be governed. If they take a very relaxed attitude to premarital sex and to family size, they are not likely to think of the onset of menstruation as a dangerous occasion. For if no one minds particularly, one way or the other, whether the girl is going to bear her husband a male heir, have many children or none, or have them in or out of wedlock, why should they bother to make the occurrence of the first menstruation into a chance for what they must regard as unnecessary sex education?

Such people are not going to hedge menstruation around with magical rules designed to underline the solemnity of the event. But tribes whose laws of property and status turn rigidly on the well-defined married state treat the puberty of girls as being a very serious matter.

When menstruation is celebrated as a big public event it is usual to make an initiation ceremony for several girls together. It is impossible to fix a date for the initiation of several girls at once which coincides with the actual time of first menstruation. So collective puberty rites for girls tend to be performed either before or after they reach physiological puberty, and if the rite is not held every year then big girls who were not ready last time, and much smaller girls who are holding it in advance, will all go through the rite together. Very often it will include a mock marriage with a ceremonial bridegroom who is not necessarily the future husband of the girl.

Throughout large parts of Central Africa puberty ceremonies are held in this way for the training of girls. Audrey Richards, in *Chisungu*, describes how the older women of the Bemba tribe enjoy the authority and respect they gain by being instructresses. They put the girls through a series of tests which read very much like Victorian parlour games. The girls must remain still without moving, or crawl through hoops or hop over logs, or drink beer from a hole in the ground. They make clay models of proverbs about the lazy wife, the good cook, the early riser, and so on.

The girls learn about the dangers of adultery, especially the magical risk to small children who have eaten food cooked on a fire contacted by either an adulteress or a menstruating woman. The fiancé of each girl stands by, and receives congratulations on her performance.

Attracting and Holding Husbands

This tribe has a system of matrilineal succession. Women and their daughters and daughters' daughters are expected to be the steady core of the village population. The existence of the village depends on their being able to attract and hold their husbands. A public initiation both teaches and advertises the new generation of women in the village and gives everyone a chance to praise and flatter the young husbands who will be its mainstay.

Among the Nayars of Malabar in south India, girls' initiation and ritual marriage before puberty were part of the high caste Hindu tradition of early marriage. Each Nayar lineage had partner lineages which played a part in each others' girls' puberty rites, providing 'husbands' for the girls. The ceremony expressed the partnership of the lineages by tying the girl and boy together in a marriage bond which was ended with the end of the ceremony. After this the little girl counted as a mature married woman. None of the magical dangers or social disgrace of premarital sex could fall now on her kin through any subsequent sexual liaisons (so long as her lovers were of suitably high-caste birth).

The Nayars were a powerful, rich warrior caste, and the men spent many years of their manhood in military service. The Nayar girls never married again so formally as on the day of their puberty ceremony. They were free to take lovers of their choice (or husbands, depending on how you define their relationship) and to dismiss them, to keep one or several at a time. All their children traced their descent through their mother, and the social role of father was almost non-existent. At any given time, the home contained these adult women, their female children, and young boys who were not yet old enough, but were in training for military service.

As to men, there would also be soldiers on leave, while the old men who had retired from fighting were in charge of political, financial and other affairs. In a system so well-adapted to specialized military functions, the puberty of girls was made the occasion of cementing alliances between Nayar lineages and paying tribute to Hindu ideals of female chastity.

These two examples show what a wide net we should cast to understand attitudes to first menstruation. The social structure sets the pattern of dominant concerns. If these relate to sex and marriage, we can be sure that they will be given some expression in current beliefs about human reproduction. We must examine the social structure minutely before we can interpret people's beliefs about menstruation.

A Symbolic Language

Reproductive disorders have their physical causes. They also can have psychosomatic causes. That is to say, with humans at least, the reproductive system is very sensitive to psychological states. Menstrual disorders (such as excessive loss of blood, continuous menstruation, or the total cessation of menstruation) are often a response to emotional shock or tension. Tribal societies which publicly celebrate a girl's coming of age have refined for themselves a set of symbols for thinking about women's personal attitudes to their role.

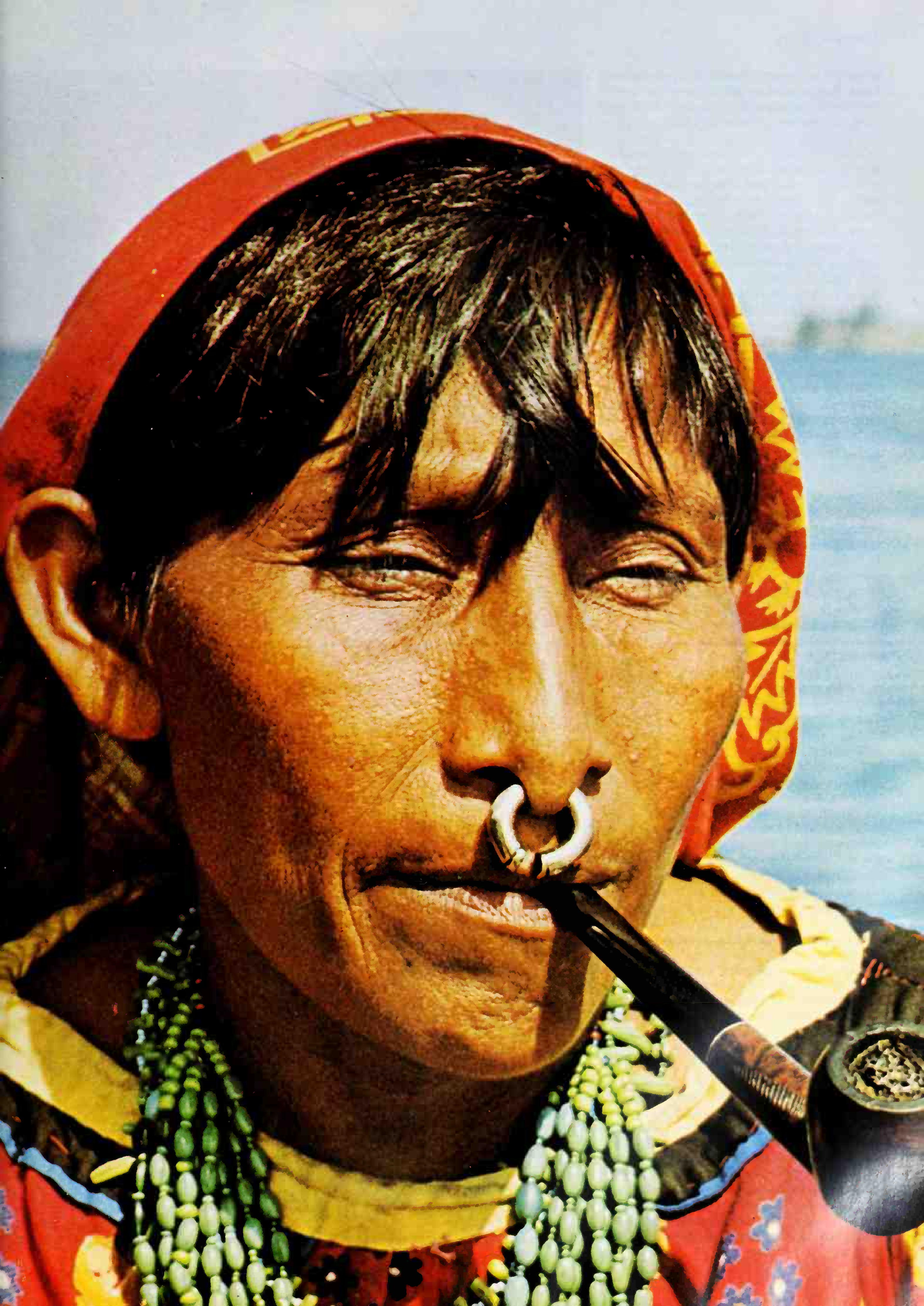
Among the Ndembu, as Turner relates, there is no shyness about bodily secretions. When they celebrate a girl's first show of blood they contrast menstruation with the blood of childbirth: the first is barren, the second fruitful. Female loss of blood is again contrasted with male blood-shedding, the dangerous deed of homicide, the noble act of killing game animals in the hunt.

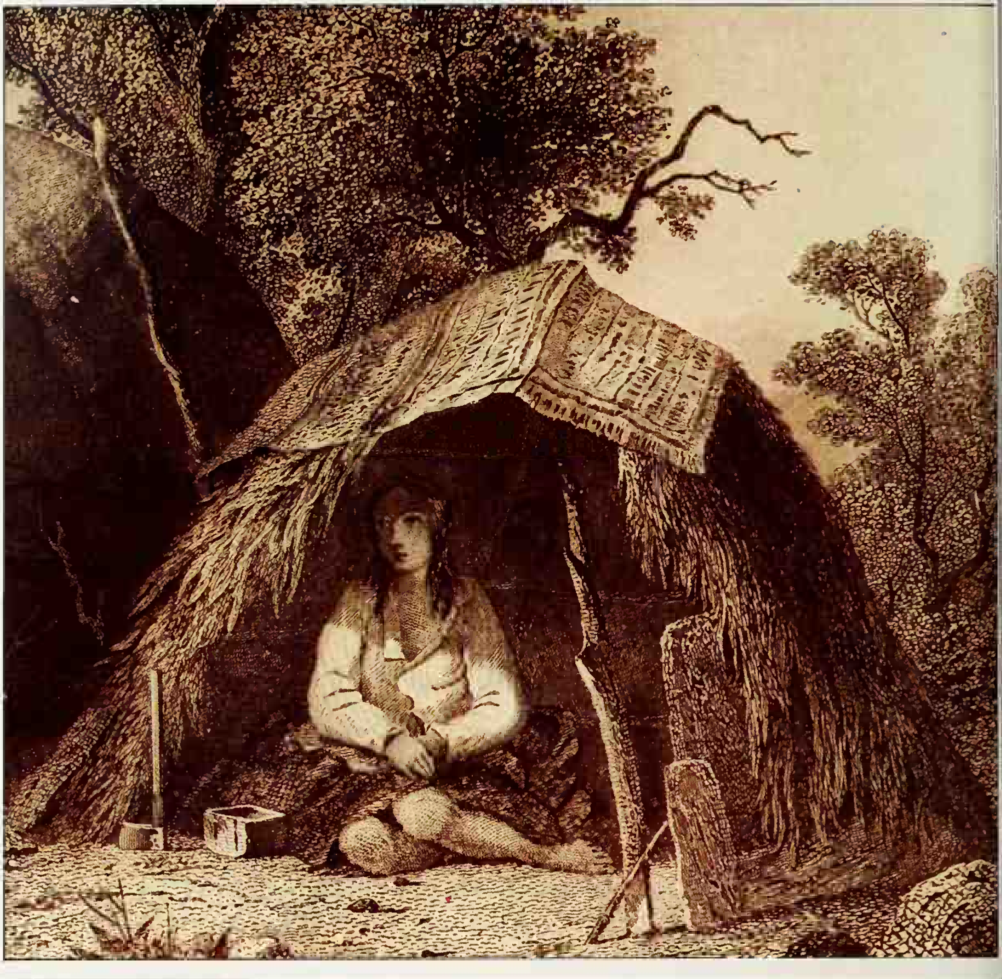
With these four kinds of red blood and their different associations, the Ndembu philosophers develop a complex pattern of good and bad symbols in which red blood can be variously combined with white milk and semen or black bile. Starting from the body and its juices they spin out a theory of the universe according to the three colours, white, red, black. In the inanimate world there are red clays, white clays and black earth. In vegetation there are trees which have red gums, milky saps and charred black wood.

From these symbols they develop a medical formulary, as it were, which enables them to construct a very expressive ritual for almost any personal event. Everyone

John Moss

Left Much of the ritual surrounding a girl's first menstruation is purely ceremonial, and is intended to teach the child her adult status and to impress on her the responsibilities of womanhood; the puberty rites can vary from ceremonies intended to emphasize the potential dangers of the girl's new status, through occasions for solemn instruction, to joyful celebrations: dancers in the Aruana puberty dance in Brazil wear masks expressive of fertility *Right* Reaching the age of child-bearing is marked in many parts of the world by a change in costume and appearance: among the Cuna of Panama girls have their hair cut short and wear a gold ring in the nose after their first menstruation





American Indian women were isolated in special huts during menstruation, and men were forbidden to have contact with them: illustration from *The Redman of America* (1856)

witnesses these ceremonies, everyone knows the formulary meanings. Then if a woman is barren and they consider that she needs to change her whole attitude to her marriage, the symbolic language is there to hand. The ritual for curing barrenness consists in making red and white signs over the patient. She is dressed as a man, given the red feather of a chief, made to dance the hunter's or homicide's dance. The wrong kind of red blood tells her that deep inside herself she is rejecting her female role. The right kind of red blood, the blood of childbirth, is needed, not menstrual blood month after month.

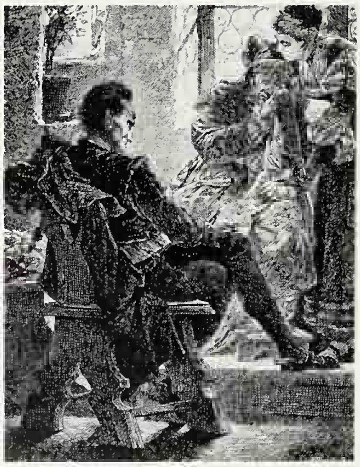
Such a ceremony, when the patient fully understands the symbols used, and knows how to relate them to her problems, is likely to be effective in certain menstrual disorders, where our own doctors are at a loss to prescribe.

MARY DOUGLAS

FURTHER READING: E. Crawley, *The Mystic Rose* (Arden Library, 1976); J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (St Martin's Press, 1980); A. Richards, *Chisungu* (Faber, 1956); C.M. Turnbull, *Wayward Servants: the Two Worlds of the African Pygmies* (Greenwood, 1976); V. W. Turner, *The Drums of Affliction* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968).

Mephistopheles

Or Mephostopheles, the name of the demon to whom Faust sold his soul; the name may come from the Greek words meaning 'he who does not like light'; in Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* he conjures up Helen of Troy for Faust, and in Goethe's *Faust* he changes himself into a dog, summons up magnificent delights and consorts with witches.
See FAUST.



Mansell Collection

Mephitic Zone

The upper air, between Earth and the first celestial sphere, haunt of daemons and other non-angelic spirits; a place of smoke and stink; hence, possibly, Mephistophiles, 'lover of the mephitic'.

Roman businessmen formed societies in honour of their patron, Mercury, which were not unlike the Rotary Clubs of today; in astrology, those born under this planet often display the quick-wittedness and glib plausibility which are the salesman's stock-in-trade. In alchemy, mercury was a metal of primary importance, standing for all the fugitive qualities of matter, without which Nature would remain static

MERCURY

THE NAME of the Roman god of trade derives from the Latin words for 'goods' and 'payment'. His worship thrived at the meanest level among tradesmen and shopkeepers. Unlike many Roman deities, he enjoyed no great state cult and priesthood. From first to last Mercury quickened business and fostered general prosperity. The Roman god of commerce was likened to the Greek god Hermes, who made him a literary gift of many attributes unknown to the Mercury of the true cult.

Rome's only temple for Mercury was dedicated in 495 BC on the Aventine Hill; its foundation accords with the major religious event at the beginning of the Roman republic. The Aventine region and its cults were especially important to plebeian politics. A famine in 496 was followed by the dedication of a temple on the Aventine to Ceres Liber and Libera in 493. Although the trinity bear Latin names, they are in fact the Greek Demeter, Dionysus and Kore (see DEMETER; DIONYSUS; PERSEPHONE), honoured with a temple built by Greeks and paid for with Roman money at the instance of the Sibylline Books of Destiny, which contained the ecstatic utterances of the Sibyl, and which were a constant source and inspiration of Greek and Etruscan religion to the Romans.

Sometimes it is assumed, perhaps correctly, that Mercury's temple belongs to the influx of Greek religion and that it rose before the others in hopes that trade rather than growth itself, Ceres, might have alleviated the dearth of grain. Whereas the temple to the trinity was destined to become an important religious and political centre for plebeian political aspirations in the face of patrician exclusion, Mercury's solitary temple never acquired great glamour despite its obvious popularity.

Every May, on the anniversary of its founding, the temple became a meeting place for Roman merchants. Like many another club, this guild met the businessmen's need for a religious association and for an expression of their solidarity. (Craftsmen met under the protection of Minerva and had their own guilds.) The month of the dedication and the annual meeting seem purposely chosen to honour the Greek Hermes' mother, Maia. Since the Roman Mercury had no such mother, the Roman state and its merchants were apparently influenced in worship by Greeks, even down to mythological details.

The temple and its cult were entrusted to a board of Mercuriales who were drawn from the second rank of society, in contrast with the social eminence of other Roman priests. In two cases membership on this board was combined with membership on the board of Capitolini, who were in charge of the Capitoline Games held in honour of Jupiter (see JUPITER). One man boasted that he was the elected leader of the Capitolini, Mercuriales, and the residents of the Aventine district; this priest had made his career first in the Roman army and later in the lower rungs of the civil administration under Augustus.

Clubs of Mercury sprang up wherever Latin-speakers went. These businessmen's associations sometimes styled Mercury *Felix* and thus retained the older sense of the word, 'productive, prosperous'. Despite the paucity of temples, Mercury was frequently honoured in Rome and other business centres with altars, statues, murals and even small roofed shrines set especially at urban intersections.

The neighbourhoods worshipped him beside their ubiquitous Lares, guardian spirits (see LARES). Augustus took a keen interest in fostering his lowly cult; accordingly, Mercury assumed the epithet Augustus, which recalled not merely the Emperor's devotion and benefaction but equally that title's derivation from the verb *augere*, 'to increase'. Before the time of Augustus neighbourhood Mercuries had acquired such peculiar titles as *Malevolus*, 'Ill-willing', in the case of one who faced no shop, and *Sobrius* where he was honoured by a milk libation in a district without a tavern. In contrast to the latter is a guild of wine merchants who were incorporated as the Club of Father Liber and Mercury. Liber was the Roman god of vine and wine.

In poetry Mercury always reflects the Greek Hermes. In one Roman poem he is made to sire the Roman Lares, who earned this prestigious parent through the humble association of neighbourhood religion.

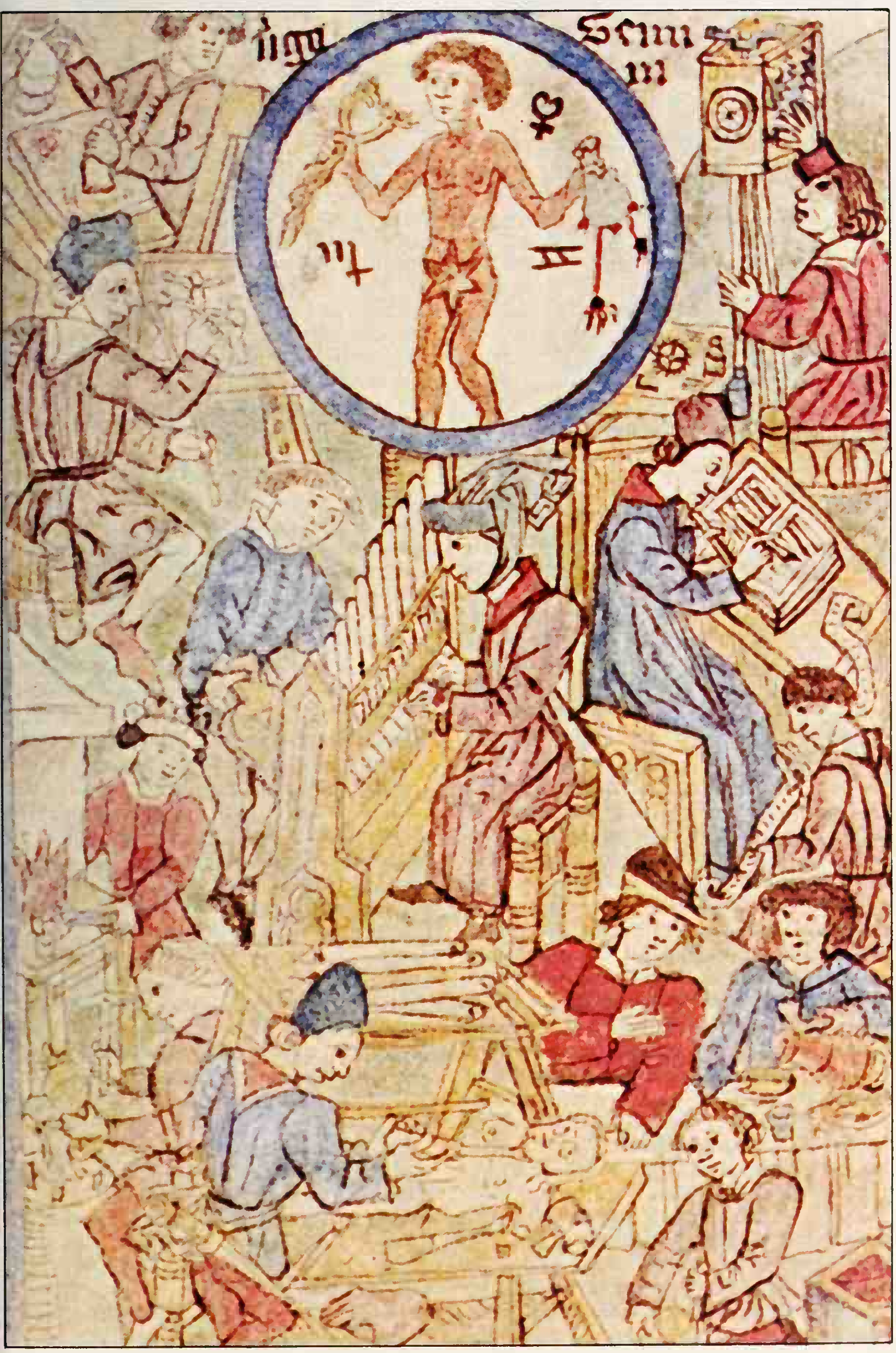
R.E.A. PALMER

Mercury in Astrology

The planet Mercury is not often seen with the naked eye, for it is never more than 28 degrees from the sun, and therefore seldom emerges from the golden glow of dusk or dawn. Because it is the smallest of the planets, and closely dependent on its parent, it is inevitably associated with children. Childish vices – lying, fraud and thieving, for instance – as well as childlike virtues such as ingenuous charm, are also attributed to Mercury. It is possible that masochists (using the word in a general sense to describe people who enjoy being treated severely as if by a stern parent) may be under the planet's influence.

Despite its childish qualities, simplicity was never a characteristic of this planet, for it was thought to influence the entire field of education, including all types of learning. Intellectual brilliance, quick-wittedness and scholastic ability are therefore considered to be typical qualities of people born strongly under Mercury.

Mercury rules trade and commerce and those born under this planet are always intrigued by technical skills, and are often knowledgeable about trades such as carpentry and engineering. A Mercurian will always have an answer for any question; and although it may not always be correct, it will at least be glib and convincing. Although not all Mercurians are plausible



Bodleian Library

The smallest of the planets, in astrology Mercury is inevitably associated with children and their qualities. Despite this, simplicity was never a characteristic of the planet which is also thought to influence trade and the whole field of learning: illustration from 15th-century English manuscript; Mercury holds a purse in one hand and his staff in the other and around him are shown some of the occupations that are traditionally connected with this planet

The Roman god of commerce, Mercury was the patron of businessmen, and was frequently honoured in the trade centres of the Roman world *Right* Pottery urn in the shape of a face, with a dedication to the god around the base, 1st century AD *Far right* Bronze statue of Mercury holding a purse

C. M. Dixon/British Museum

C. M. Dixon/British Museum

rogues, the plausible rogue will almost always be a Mercurian.

The shy, timid and tongue-tied people of this world need the Mercurians to speak up for them, and a discussion about whether or not the time is ripe for wages to be raised often turns out to be an argument between two Mercurians. It is likely that neither of them will become heated, for Mercury often appears to be rather cold and aloof, even in sexual affairs: unlike many other people, Mercurians think of these as just a part of the glorious game of life. When they marry, many of them do not really take their partners 'for better for worse, for richer for poorer. . . till death do us part' – as they think that, if the desire seizes them, the game can as easily be played with a different partner.

Among typically Mercurian professions is that of the journalist, for instead of being directly involved in life he is mainly concerned with viewing it objectively. A person born under Mercury may succeed in any learned profession, or as a schoolmaster who may have a wide general knowledge without being an authority on any one subject, or as a doctor. When a Mercurian is connected with the arts, it is often possible to discern a lack of the heavy, thoroughgoing seriousness which some artists seem to feel is the least that life deserves.

Mercury the Metal

Since the Renaissance there has been one fundamental principle in all alchemical thought: that matter is composed of the three 'philosophical elements' of mercury, sulphur and salt. This theory had a very considerable influence.

The idea of what constitutes an 'element' has undergone considerable changes since the days of early science. The universe was at one time conceived of as a composite of tiny particles which had specific qualities. According to the teachings of Greek philosophers including Aristotle (384-322 BC), and also the early alchemical writings, the primary qualities are those of fire, water, earth and air (see ELEMENTS). These four 'essences' found their completion in the 'quintessence', the spiritual.

Many systems of correspondences (see CORRESPONDENCES) were constructed on this basis. For instance, certain elements had an affinity for certain colours, planets, tastes and 'humours' (the four liquids present in the body, differing combinations of which determined both one's temperament and one's physique). This kind of systematizing was very important at a time when empirical science was considered to be less important than the cultivation and refinement of the old tradition; but in this form it dealt only with what we would call physical states of matter. It soon became clear that there were differences in Nature which could not be totally explained simply by taking into account the differing combinations of physical particles; that there were also chemical differences in the modern sense.

Following the philosophical dogma that the multitude of phenomena must be reduced to fundamental and simple elements, the earlier alchemists taught that all matter consisted of two different kinds of components: 'mercury' and 'sulphur'.

The alchemists began by dealing with the theory of metallic transformation. They thought that metals such as lead could be reduced to 'mercuric' and 'sulphuric' components when treated in the right way. The differences in weight, appearance and so on were explained by a different composition of these two elements. The principal theory of alchemy was that the natural maturation of metals, from 'immature' or base substances to 'noble' and precious metals like silver and gold, could be artificially set in motion. The alchemists therefore experimented with methods that seemed likely to change the proportion of the combined elements. However, with the rapid growth of scientific knowledge in the Middle Ages it soon became apparent that this simple theory did not really work.

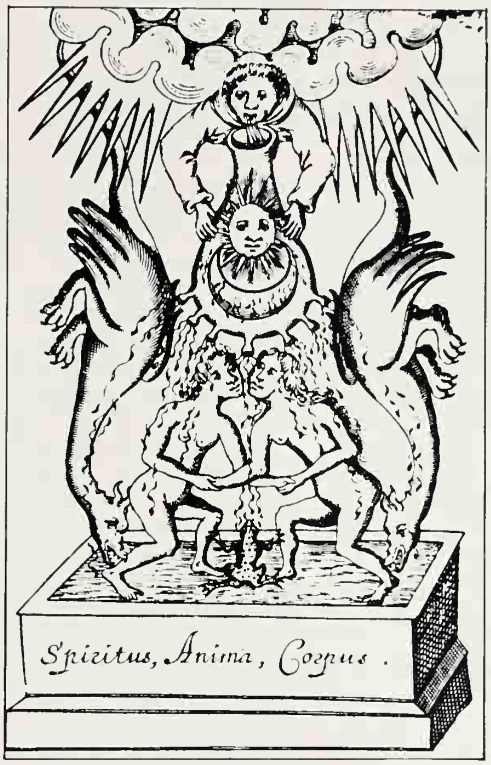
Salt, the Third Element

Paracelsus, the great Swiss scholar, enriched the theory by introducing a third 'philosophical element' – that of salt. The wealth of natural phenomena could now be explained more satisfactorily. According to this theory, salt is the element of palpability, tactility, tangibility; it represents noninflammability and fixity. It is because it contains salt that matter has weight.

Mercury, or quicksilver, stands for the fugitive qualities of matter, for its spiritual element, for mobility, and for the property of some material things to become liquid, so enabling the elements to influence each other. So without the spirit of mercury Nature would remain motionless and unchangeable.

We can easily understand the great importance the concept of mercury had in the teachings of alchemy, whose basis is the artificial induction of evolution from the 'impure' to the 'noble'. It was said that the nearer a metal came to the ideal of 'golden nobility', the more mercury it contained. In many alchemical treatises, therefore, 'mercury' also stands for the *materia prima*, the First Matter of the Philosophers' Stone, and sometimes also for the Stone itself. Care must therefore be taken when reading alchemical texts not to confuse these various meanings of 'mercury'.

Sulphur is the element which gives natural things the quality of combustibility. No matter, according to the alchemists, could ever burn without containing a certain percentage of sulphur. One example, often cited in the writings of the Paracelsists, is a good illustration of what is meant by this theory of three elements: if wood is burnt, the flames are nourished by its content of sul-


Spiritus, Anima, Corpus.

In alchemical treatises the term mercury may stand for the First Matter which is to become the Philosophers' Stone; but it may also describe matter undergoing transmutation and even the product itself: symbolic representation of the origin of the Philosophers Stone from Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* published in 1652

Ronan Picture Library/E. P. Goldschmidt & Co. Ltd.

phur. That which flies up into the air as smoke and smell is the fugitive mercury. Salt is what remains in the ashes.

Such an all-embracing concept could also be extended to the philosophical sphere, giving alchemy its two aspects, the 'chemical' and the 'spiritual'. Man, being a microcosm himself, a miniature reflection of external Nature, was also composed of three elements: body, soul and spirit, corresponding to the three elements in the rest of Nature.

⊖ SAL salt	CORPUS body
🜍 SULPHUR	ANIMA soul
☿ MERCURIUS mercury	SPIRITUS spirit

When the alchemists wrote of transforming material things by rearranging their proportions of salt, sulphur and mercury, a real chemical change could be meant, but the text could also have a hidden meaning; it could really deal with human transformation, thus misleading those who were greedy only for material wealth.

Of the three Paracelsian elements mercury is the one which is mentioned most often; it corresponded to everything that was regarded as belonging to the sphere of spirit. But again, 'mercury' could designate different things. *Mercurium nostrum*, 'Our Mercury' is often described as being different from ordinary mercury or quicksilver, which has the property, unique among metals, of remaining in a liquid state at normal temperatures. If this metal is dropped it forms into tiny elusive silver balls. The ancient scientists did not know whether quicksilver should be regarded as a metal or as a liquid. The German encyclopedist Johann Heinrich Zedler (1732-1754) describes it as:

> A mineralic or metallic sap or humour (liquor) which is very heavy, liquid and volatile and looks like a silvery fusion. It is a liquid which does not moisten, forming compounds with all metals, especially accepting gold eagerly, mixing and amalgamating with it; and it can be separated from it by a hot fire, but at moderate heat forms a compound again that never can be separated. Mercury is so piercing that – as Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-1665) says – 'if you put it on the great toe of your foot and take a ducat in the mouth, it will get a whitish surface' . . . It is regarded as the mother of all other metals which, depending on their different mixture with metallic salt and with sulphur, and depending also on the different influences of the celestial forces, are said to grow in their different ways.

In the early part of the 18th century the doctrine of Paracelsus was evidently still very much alive.

'Our mercury' is what is otherwise referred to as the First Matter (that is, the original matter) of the substance which is to become the Philosophers' Stone. George Starkey, an English alchemist writing at the turn of the 16th century, in his book *The Stone of the Philosophers: Embracing the First Matter and the Dual Process for the Vegetable and Metallic Tinctures* says:

> All true philosophers agree that the first matter of all metals is a moist vapour, raised by the action of the central fires in the bowels of the earth, which – circulating through its pores – meets with the crude air and is coagulated by it into an unctuous water, adhering to the earth, which serves it for a receptacle . . . If it is sublimed leisurely through places which are hot and pure, where the fatness of sulphur adheres to it, this vapour (which the Philosophers call 'their Mercury') is joined to that fatness and becomes an unctuous matter, which . . . where the earth is subtle, pure and moist, fills the pores of it – and so gold is made.

A Complexity of Meanings

The term mercury may stand for the First Matter, but in the paradoxical language of the alchemical treatises it may also designate the matter undergoing transmutation, and finally the product itself, the mysterious Philosophers' Stone. C.G. Jung, the great Swiss psychologist, showed that it may also designate water, fire, the spirit of the air, spirit in general, or the soul.

Because of the medieval doctrine that postulated the existence of two elements, mercury and sulphur (before Paracelsus added salt), only two components of matter are mentioned as being of importance for 'the great work' in most of the old texts: something red and something white, or – in the language of poetical allusions – a red and a white rose, which are to be combined in the 'alchemical marriage' to form the supreme unity of the Philosophers' Stone. Alternatively, alchemists may speak of a male element, the red lion, and of a female element, the white eagle or the lily, which find their bridal bed in the retort in order to bring forth something new and potent out of the fire.

Modern chemists have often tried to follow the alchemical prescriptions literally and have, for instance, said that the red lion must be antimony trisulphide, the lily silver chloride, and so on – but it is hard to believe that the mysterious Stone would not be something more important and powerful. So we have to be content with thinking of 'sulphur' and 'mercury', or of soul and spirit, in whatever sense, as being combined mysteriously in order to bring forth the final stage which makes it possible to transform impure metals to gold, and to heal all diseases by making the elixir of life (see ELIXIR OF LIFE).

The Alchemical Marriage

The assumption of an original dualism of the two elements leads us back to the days of Alexandrian alchemy in Hellenistic times, when the gnostic systems exerted a powerful influence. Secret doctrines of all kinds and ages often speak of the two opposing principles which must be united in order to form again the divine integral unity as it must have existed before the Creation tore it asunder (see OPPOSITES).

Dualism means tension, opposition, multitude – and so a dynamic universe is created; but the two halves, despite their different qualities, tend to be re-united in varying proportions of the components. In the language of alchemy, the element of sulphur and the element of mercury are found in different proportions in all natural things and in order to stimulate their evolution it is necessary to separate them, to lead them back to their original simplicity, and then to unite them in the perfect way. This union of the two pure elements is the 'alchemical marriage' of 'spiritual sulphur' with 'spiritual mercury'.

The idea of this marriage was conveyed in a variety of allegorical forms in alchemical manuscripts; such allegories expressed the necessity of combining the opposites, normally referred to as sulphur and mercury, in order to take part in the creative plan. The important thing was to know the right degree and proportion.

In a psychological sense we could assume this to mean leading the spirit (mercury) along the right path so that it is able to accept the soul (sulphur), and also the 'burning' sphere of instincts and desires, in a creative embrace which would bring forth a unified whole, a mature personality.

But this view would be too incomplete and theoretical if we were to forget the third principle, the bodily element of 'salt', which makes it possible to shape a system able to reflect the wholeness of human nature, into which the material process is involuntarily projected. Only by this means could the 'great work' of the alchemist become the perfect mirror of what the 'philosophers' wanted to see when beholding their furnaces and alembics. (See also ALCHEMY; PHILOSOPHERS' STONE; ROSICRUCIANS.)

HANS BIEDERMANN

MERKABAH

DURING THE LATTER PART of the Second Temple period and the subsequent Rabbinic period (the years preceding, and the centuries which followed, the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD), the visions of Ezekiel (chapter 1, 1-26) and Isaiah (chapter 6, 1-3) provided the basis of a particular form of early Jewish mysticism.

Both visions are of the throne of God, and Ezekiel in addition describes a 'fiery chariot' (see EZEKIEL). Although the more rationalist and non-mystical Jewish thinkers also concerned themselves with these biblical passages – was there a throne in heaven? could a purely spiritual God be 'seen'? – the mystics cultivated an ecstatic kind of mysticism which taught its initiates ways and techniques of achieving the visionary experience of the divine glory and splendour of light: the throne.

In the literature of these mystics, the throne (*kisse*), which is the object of the ecstatic vision, is more often called the chariot (*merkabah*) under the influence of Ezekiel's text. This is therefore known as Merkabah mysticism, to some extent distinct from later forms of Jewish mysticism, which were largely speculative, and whose practice of meditation and contemplation was designed to culminate in the experience of communion, even union, with God.

The merkabah mystics seem to have experienced ascensions of the soul, which were not without danger. In rabbinic circles only chosen disciples were permitted to engage in these mystical disciplines, known as *ma'aseh merkabah* (the work of the chariot). The Mishna (a 2nd-century rabbinic collection of religious law) contains the passage: 'The story of Genesis is not to be explained to two men, the story of the merkabah not even to one, unless he be wise and can deduce wisdom of his own accord.'

The 'perils of the soul' which the adept encountered during his ascent through the various celestial spheres are described realistically and convincingly enough in the ancient texts. To overcome these dangers and pass the various celestial barriers the adept had to use mystical formulae and 'seals'. Hence merkabah mysticism also had its magical side: an apparatus of incantations, spells and conjurations.

Within the merkabah practice proper the magical part was subservient to the essentially mystical goal of the vision of the throne, as well as, possibly, of the splendour of the divine majesty on the throne. The outstanding feature of this kind of mysticism is its emphasis on the transcendent, majestic, tremendous and awesomely numinous character of the deity.

The experience of loving communion, so common in later mysticism, is absent here. The initiate rises through worlds, spheres, heavens and celestial mansions or 'palaces' (*hekhaloth*) guarded by all kinds of terrifying celestial keepers until at last, if all goes well and he be found worthy, he stands in awe and trembling before the supreme and blinding vision of the divine splendour.

Merkabah mysticism is a mysticism of the *mysterium tremendum* (the awesome, divine mystery), and it left a permanent mark on the Jewish liturgy, inspiring some of the finest and most impressive religious poetry and hymns. The esoteric teachings and practices of the true merkabah tradition subsequently fell into disuse, but some were absorbed into the Cabala.

The Zohar – the 'book of splendour' which, with the Sefir Yetzirah, makes up the mystic books of the medieval Cabala – became the text for the work of the chariot, as it was practised in southern France and Spain. Composed by Moses de Leon of Guadalajara at the end of the 13th century, it was claimed to be a compilation of much older texts, many of them attributed to the 2nd-century rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, but there is no reason to suppose that it is the work of any other than Moses.

Superficially a commentary on the Pentateuch, the Zohar is considered to conceal within it the most mystical concepts of the nature of God. The medieval Cabalists, meditating on the text, conceived the ascent of the fiery merkabah through the spheres as a trance-like ascent of the sefirotic tree: 'some souls go up, as of their free will and by their own high intent, to make a holocaust of themselves, amidst rejoicing in the Supreme Light which shines forth from the Holy King.'

R.J. ZWI WERBLOWSKY*

(See also CABALA; MEDITATION.)

MERLIN

ONE OF THE PARTICULAR features of the Arthurian legend is its strange blending of Christian with non-Christian motifs. Its orthodox medieval chivalry has an alien context. A haunting strangeness overhangs the Round Table and the Holy Grail. Behind both, and behind King Arthur himself, stand shadowy presences. Merlin, Arthur's court wizard and prophet, is the character who chiefly embodies them.

He first takes literary shape in the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth (see ARTHUR). Toward 1135 Geoffrey published some alleged prophecies, dealing in a riddling style with English and Welsh affairs over several centuries. He ascribed them to a British prophet whom he called Merlin, and soon afterwards inserted them in his *History of the Kings of Britain*. This famous and influential book supplies Merlin with a sketchy career, in the setting of the same largely bogus history that enshrines King Arthur. About 1150 Geoffrey wrote a Latin poem entitled *Vita Merlini* (Life of Merlin), adding further particulars.

As formed by Geoffrey of Monmouth, the character combines two old Welsh traditions, which originally concerned two different men. The real Merlin, so far as such a person ever existed, was a bard and seer named Myrddin. He flourished late in the 6th century AD, in what was then still a Cymric borderland near the Solway Firth. Fragments of obscure Welsh poetry by him and about him survive. A piece of trouble-making by Myrddin among the British chieftains is said to have caused the battle of Arderydd, near Carlisle, in the 570s. As a supernatural punishment, it is further said, a vision in the sky unbalanced his reason, and sent him wandering through the forest of Celidon in the Scottish Lowlands.

If Myrddin ever met Arthur at all, he can only have done so as a youth in Arthur's old age. For literary reasons, however Geoffrey of Monmouth wanted a Myrddin who was rather older than Arthur. Geoffrey altered the name a little; and to plant the prophet in the period where he wanted him, he adapted a separate legend preserved by Nennius (the monk of Bangor, who gives the oldest account of Arthur), about a mysterious 'boy without a father'. The boy was originally Ambrosius, who grew up to be a 5th century British leader. Geoffrey retold the story, making 'Merlin' its hero instead, thereby shifting his birth back to about 450.

The Literary Merlin

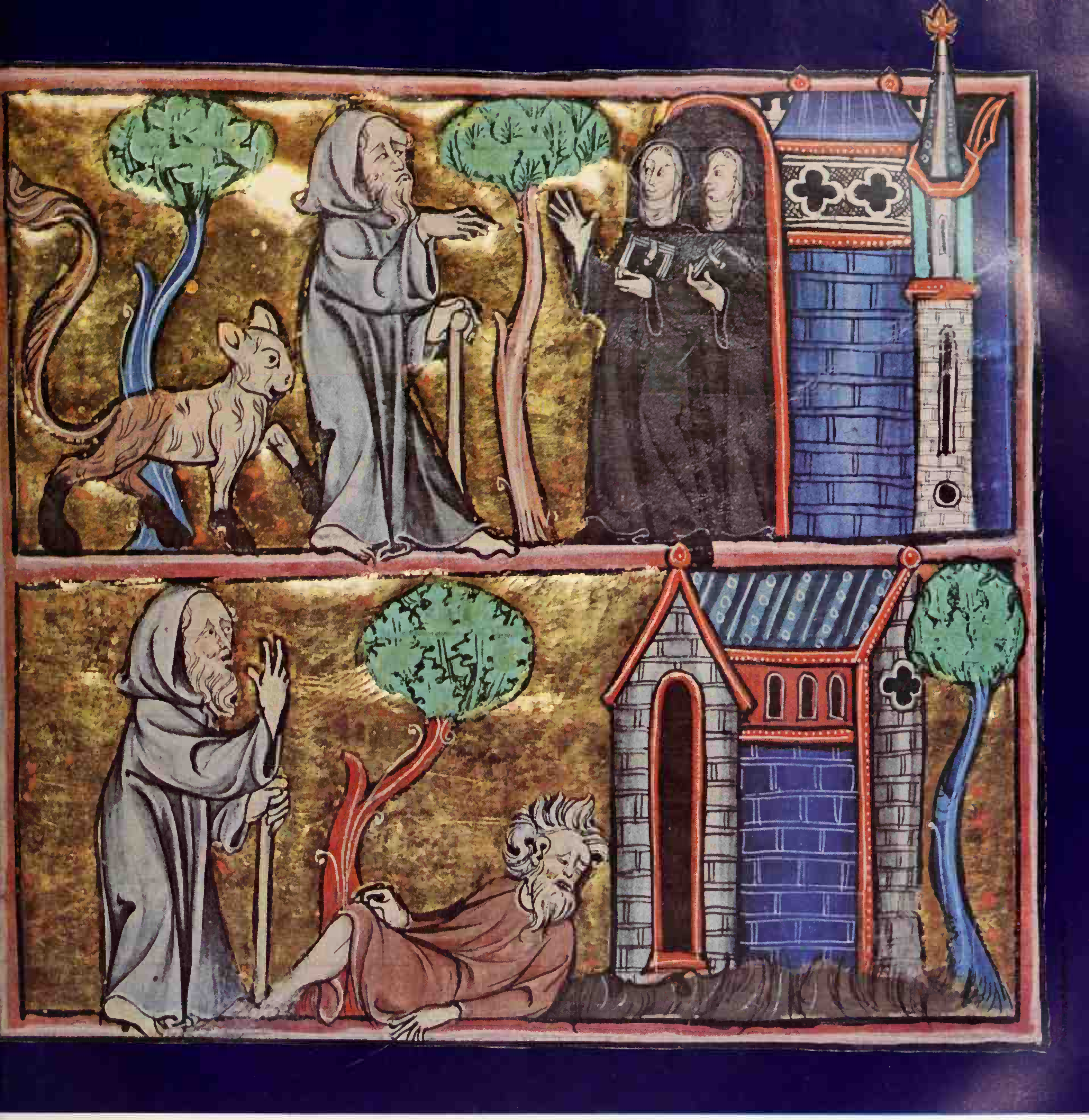
It will be clear that Merlin, from his very beginning under that name, is a product of imaginative synthesis. There would be little point in looking for a single 'historical Merlin' to go with the 'historical Arthur' who emerges dimly to view around the year 500. Merlin's interest lies in the themes which various authors develop through him, either in pseudo-history or in stories with no serious factual pretensions.

In Geoffrey's *History* Merlin first appears as a boy in Carmarthen, with a cryptic birth-story about the impregnation of his mother by an invisible demon, and a long prophetic outpouring. Some years later, at the request of King Aurelius, he uses magic to help transport Stonehenge from its supposed original site in Ireland to Salisbury Plain. At his last appearance, he enables King Uther to achieve access to the lady Igerna, and father Arthur on her, by giving him a magical likeness to her husband.

The first and third of these exploits show Merlin as a prophet and wizard. The second is more remarkable. It connects the character with a remote British past, and not merely fancifully. Professor R.J.C. Atkinson has shown that, behind the invented marvels, Geoffrey may well have incorporated authentic traditions about Stonehenge and the transport of megaliths from the west, which had survived orally. If so, Merlin is in some degree a projection of a Britain older than Christianity – older, indeed, than the Celtic population which produced Arthur and the mythology surrounding him.

After presiding over Arthur's conception, Merlin fades out of the *History*. In the *Vita Merlini* Geoffrey draws on material about the actual bard Myrddin. He hints at a fate which becomes explicit in later romance, Merlin's seduction by the enchantress Vivien or Nimue (sometimes identified with the Lady of the Lake – see LANCELOT), who traps him in a magic prison.

Geoffrey's Arthurian work was developed along romantic lines by Wace and Layamon. Both of these poets reduced Merlin's importance. But he proved too fascinating to stay



The 'real Merlin' was the Celtic bard Myrddin, some of whose poetry survives: he lost his reason and went wandering in the forest of Celidon: illustration from a French history of Merlin, 13th century

reduced. He took root in folklore, becoming associated, like Arthur himself, with places and stones, even trees. His prophecies were taken seriously, and are said to have been quoted by angry Welsh against Henry II.

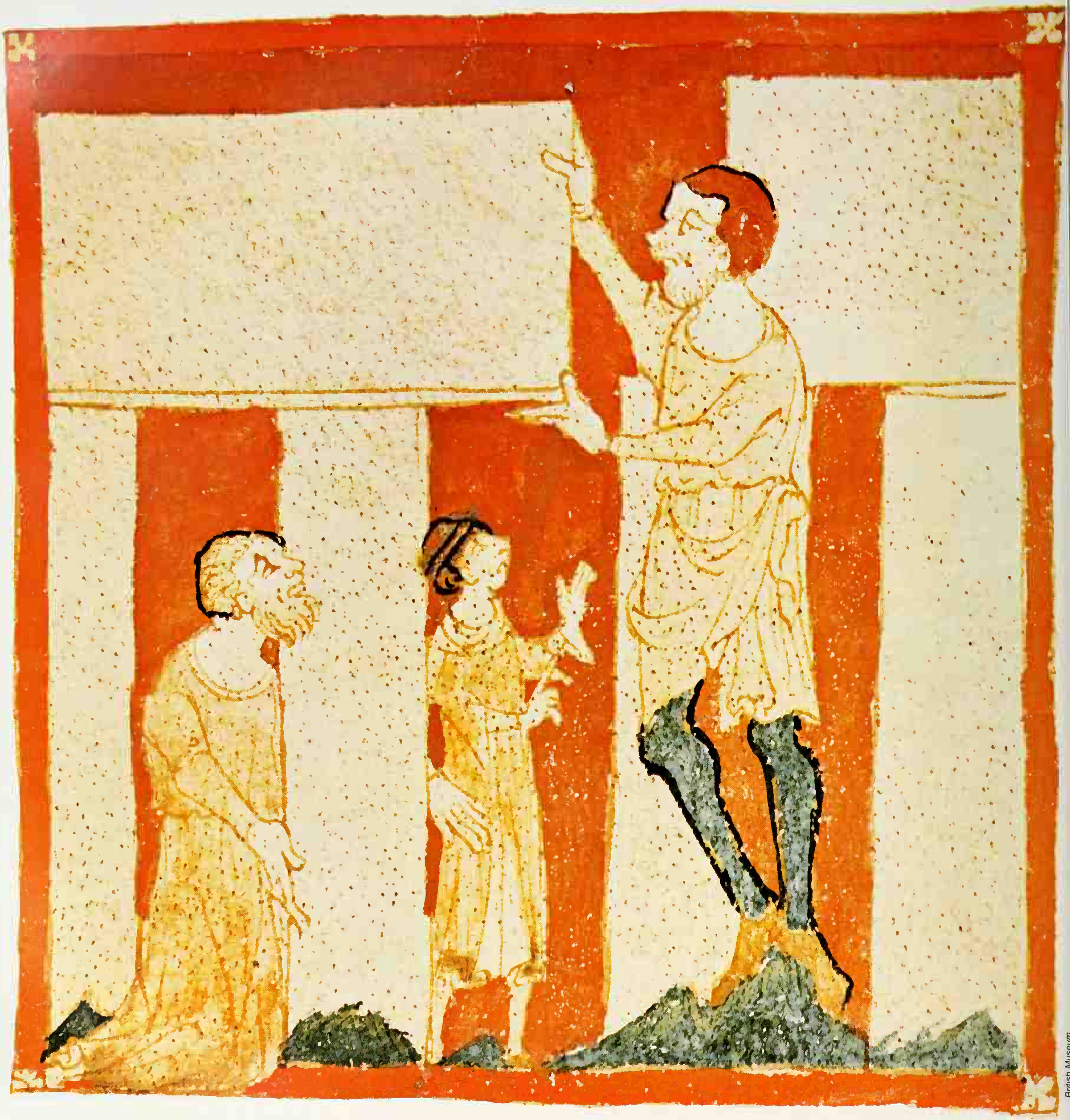
Within the Arthurian cycle he recovered from his early setback and rose to new prominence. Romancers gave him a major role in the education of Arthur, in the foundation of the Round Table, in the mysteries of the Grail. His curious birth was enlarged upon: it was told how the powers of hell had tried to bring about the conception of a Satanic child, but the scheme miscarried, and the chosen mother bore an ambiguous being who went his own way.

The French Vulgate series of Arthurian tales, completed toward 1230, includes a *Story of Merlin* later adapted into English in *Arthour and Merlin*, a long metrical narrative. Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* puts Merlin's importance on a firm basis. The seer arranges Arthur's birth, gets the sword Excalibur for him, aids him in war and foretells events. But Malory's habit of pruning away excessive magic prevents Merlin from dominating the scene quite as much as he does in the earlier accounts.

Fairly soon, in fact, he drops out. His foreknowledge of woes to come depresses him. He falls disastrously in love with Nimue (or Nyneve, as Malory calls her). Finally she grows tired of him, and turns one of his own spells against him to imprison him in a cave. Like the Arthur of folklore he remains in the cave and goes on living indefinitely. Unlike Arthur, he is not destined to return.

Romance of the kind written by Malory petered out during the Renaissance. Its themes lingered on to inspire poets, such as Ariosto and, partly through him, Spenser. The latter's *Faerie Queene* presents the Arthurian world in a new guise. He introduces Merlin, but as a rather colourless sage, more or less rationalized.

Attempts to rationalize Merlin continue in more recent authors. Tennyson's notes for the work which became the *Idylls of the*



Merlin is credited with employing magic to bring Stonehenge from its original site in Ireland; from a 14th century manuscript

British Museum

King show that he meant at first to turn the magician into a symbol of Science. He did not actually go so far. The Merlin of the *Idylls* remains pre-eminently a Wise Man, very august and cryptic, with superhuman powers. This partly rationalized sage reappears in Edwin Arlington Robinson's poem *Merlin* (1917).

The fully-fledged magician has been revived, in violently contrasting ways, by two other modern authors. T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone* (1938) takes up the neglected topic of the boyhood of Arthur and Merlin's role as his tutor. The treatment is a mixture of high comedy and high seriousness. Merlin's prophetic gift takes the form of remembering the future and forgetting the past. In *The Sword in the Stone* itself, his non-consecutive time is largely a joke. In the sequels, making up the tetralogy *The Once and Future King*, it becomes thematic. Arthurian England is a country of the imagination where the whole of the Middle Ages is happening simultaneously.

C.S.Lewis's *That Hideous Strength* (1945) is a fantasy influenced by the poetry of Charles Williams. Its setting is the 'near future' of science fiction. An organization which purports to be scientific, but is in fact diabolic, plans to unleash genocide in the name of progress. Normal human ideals – including the Christian ones of the author himself – prove incapable of inspiring effective resistance. The menace is defeated through a resurrection of Merlin. He has the power, as no modern man has, to open the door to spiritual forces from a lost antiquity, and enlist their aid on the side of life.

Though presented through fiction, Lewis's insight into the character may well be sound. Particularly in the Stonehenge chapters of Geoffrey of Monmouth, with their marks of a genuine tradition Merlin may put us briefly in contact with remote and formative phases of the human spirit which we can no longer think ourselves back into. Before the traditions came to focus in him, most of the keys had been lost and only rumours survived.

GEOFFREY ASHE

'In her going down they saw her tail which was like the tail of a porpoise, speckled like a mackerel . . . from the navel upwards her back and breasts were like a woman's': this 17th-century description has been paralleled in many other accounts of mermaids

MERMAIDS AND MERMEN

THE MERMAID, a beautiful girl to her waist but a fish from there down, and her male counterpart, the merman, are still among the most popular of legendary creatures. The mermaid of tradition is a seductive and dangerous enchantress, who personifies the beauty and treachery of the sea, and especially of the shoals and rocks of the coastline. She is also closely associated with the moon (the ruler of the tides), which is represented by the mirror she holds in her hand. Her long hair is said to be composed of green seaweed, or perhaps of the rays of the sun as they fall upon the water. In folklore this fatal green-haired spirit appears constantly in strange legends of lake, river and sea, and for a sailor to see a mermaid is almost always a portent of disaster.

Among the predecessors of the medieval and modern mermaid are the Sirens, who lured sailors to destruction, though exactly when and why they changed from bird-women to fish-women is uncertain (see SIRENS).

The mer-people were supposed to dwell in an underwater world of great splendour, to which the mermaids lured their victims and where they kept their souls close prisoner in the kingdom beneath the waves. This theme occurs again and again in the lore of the sea, with a constant emphasis on the presence of a mermaid as foreshadowing some calamity – storm, shipwreck, drowning.

On the other hand, power over a mermaid could always be obtained by possession of her cap or belt. There are many tales in which a human being brings a mermaid on shore to be his wife. In 'The Little Mermaid' by Hans Christian Andersen, a mermaid takes human shape so as to acquire a soul, to be near the man she loves for all eternity. There are also many stories of marriages between mermen and human women.

In the Gironde, in France, mermaids had two tails. In Brittany, the Morgans or sea women were extremely dangerous to men. The fisherfolk of the Channel Islands believed in a strange sea creature called the King of the Auxcrinier, whose presence was feared as the forerunner of storm. In Norse folklore the Havemand is a merman with a black beard and green hair.

The Estonian Nakk is someone who has drowned, and may appear as man, woman, child or even animal. His lovely singing entrances people and he swallows them in his giant mouth. A Nakk maiden is very pretty, combs her long locks with a golden comb and only sometimes has the tail of a fish. The Nakki of Finland are very similar, and their women have gleaming white bodies, and breasts so long that they can throw them over their shoulders.

The nixes or nixies of Germanic lore are spirits of fresh water. Green-haired and lovely, they can transform themselves into old women, in which form they venture on land on market days. They lure humans to drown in treacherous waters, and must have at least one victim each year.

In 1403, it is said, a mermaid was found becalmed in shallow water at Edam in Holland. She became accustomed to life on land but never learned to speak. She lived for some 15 years after her capture, and was given Christian burial.

In 1560 several supposed mermaids were caught by fishermen in Ceylon. They were dissected, and it was reported that they possessed organs like those of human beings. An early 17th-century tale from America reported an attack on a canoe by a fierce merman whose arm had to be severed with a hatchet because he would not release his grip. The famous explorer Henry Hudson reported a sighting of mermaids in 1608, near Novaya Zemlya in the Arctic Ocean north of Russia. He described one of them as being 'as big as one of us, her skin very white and long hair hanging down behind, of colour black. In her going down they saw her tail which was like the tail of a porpoise, speckled like a mackerel . . .' and 'from the navel upwards her back and breasts were like a woman's.'

The Sea-Maid's Music

Among many curious legends once current in the British Isles is the tale of the mermaid who swam up a subterranean channel from the River Mersey at sunrise, seated herself on a church bell and began to sing. In Cornwall, the mermaid of Zennor lured a lovelorn youth into the sea by the charm of her voice, and for years afterwards his voice could be heard singing from deep beneath the waves.

However, according to John Shaw, the author of *Speculum Mundi* (1635), the song of the mermaid was not as tuneful as was popularly supposed. 'But above all the Mermaids and Men-fish seem to me the most strange fish in the waters. Some have supposed them to be devils or spirits in regard to their whooping noise that they make.'

There is a tradition that the people of Machaire in Ireland are the descendants of mermaids. The Irish thought that mermaids were originally pagan women, transformed into mermaids by St Patrick, then banished from the Emerald Isle forever.

If Ireland managed to dispose of its mermaids, as well as its snakes, Scotland did not. Till the close of the 18th century it was a common belief in Aberdeenshire that mermaids inhabited the caves of the rocky coastline. As late as the 1890s a mermaid was said to have appeared on two occasions in the Orkneys.

The Scots also populated their inland waters with spirits. It was a certain portent of drowning to see a kelpie, a mischievous and evil creature which lived in a stream or a lake and appeared in the form of a horse. He would lure people to climb on his back,

Maori carving of an eel-shaped creature with the head of a man. Supernatural sea creatures are said to inhabit many parts of the globe

Axel Poignant

and then drown them in the water. The Welsh equivalent is the *ceffyl*, or water horse. In northern England many lakes and ponds were said to be tenanted by a sinister siren known as Jenny Green Teeth, a green-haired monster with a taste for drowning young children who ventured too close to her domain.

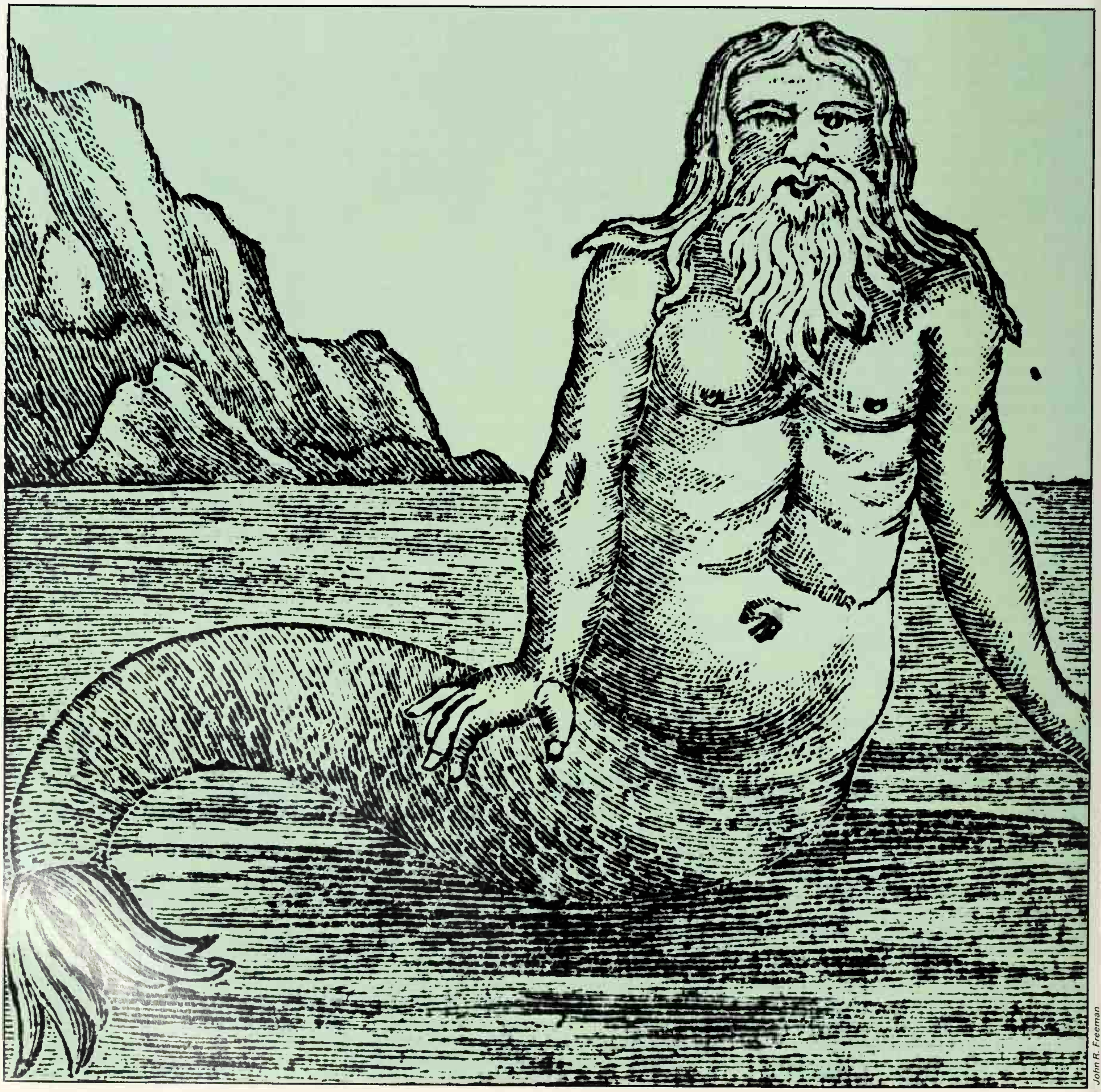
With the passing of the age of magic, dedicated rationalists attempted to discover in natural history the true source of the mermaid legend. Manatees and dugongs have been considered likely candidates. Both are sea mammals (of the order Sirenia, found in coastal waters of the Atlantic and Indian oceans) and they suckle their young, holding them with their flippers in the manner of a woman with a baby. The walrus and the seal are other candidates. One naturalist commented: 'I have seen many plain women but never yet one quite so plain as the face of a dugong.'

The Roman writer Pliny, the first naturalist to discuss mermaids at length, would have been intrigued by the amount of evidence for the existence of mermaids which came to light in Europe from the 16th century onwards, in the shape of fish-tailed sub-humans, most of whom found their way into fairground booths or were exhibited at inns. In 1830 a mermaid was on show at the Egyptian Hall in London, and in the 1870s Phineas Barnum's 'Greatest Show on Earth' included a mermaid. Until London's Royal College of Surgeons was bombed in the Second World War, two stuffed mermaids were preserved in a showcase in its museum.

Sightings of mermaids, of one sort or another, have still not ceased. In June 1857 the *Shipping Gazette* reported the appearance off Britain of a mermaid with 'full breast, dark complexion, and comely face.' In 1937 a mermaid was reported in the Far East; and in 1956 at Accra in Africa, a bank cashier was persuaded to hand over more than £500 from his till to a confidence trickster disguised as a mermaid, who offered to double his money for him.

ERIC MAPLE

Among the marvels reported by seamen and explorers of the 16th and 17th centuries were fish-tailed men and women. Occasional sightings have continued up to the present century



Danish Tourist Board

John R. Freeman

MESMERISM

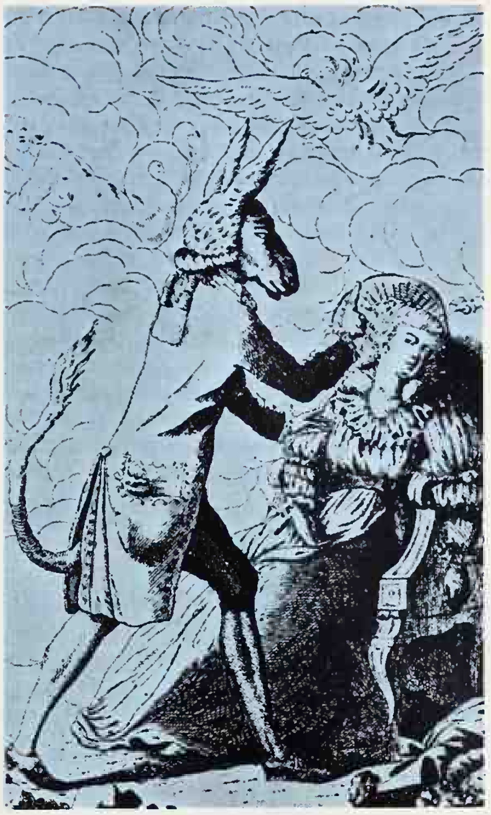
THE ORIGINATOR of 'mesmerism', and indirectly of much else, Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) was born in Swabia and graduated in medicine at Vienna some thirty years later. He formed the idea that the planets influence the course of diseases, through a force that resembles magnetism, and he began to treat patients by applying magnets to their bodies.

However, before long he decided that the magnets were unnecessary, since the curative influence (and he claimed some striking cures) apparently emanated strongly from the hand and nervous system of the operator and could be transmitted to the patient by contact and 'passes'. He gave the name 'animal magnetism' to this curative influence, because of certain supposed analogies with 'mineral' magnetism (see MAGNETISM). Mesmer believed that the influence could be transmitted to objects (especially metal objects, or bottles or glasses of water) held in or stroked by the hand, and then discharged through a suitable conductor.

In 1778 Mesmer, who had fallen out with the Vienna medical faculty, came to Paris, where patients flocked to his salon. In order to cope with their numbers, he devised the celebrated *baquet*, a wooden tub filled with water and iron filings and containing a large number of bottles of 'magnetized' water. From it protruded iron rods to conduct the magnetic influence. Many cures of various kinds of diseases were reported, often precipitated by a 'crisis' of convulsive movements, and although, in 1784, Royal Commissions from the Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of Medicine reported that the 'magnetic fluid' was a myth and its effects due to imagination, the faithful were not dismayed. A grateful patient exclaimed: 'If it is to illusion that I owe the health I believe myself to enjoy, I humbly beg the learned gentlemen, who see so clearly, not to destroy it.'

Mesmer attracted a number of pupils, of whom the most influential was the Marquis de Puységur (1751-1825). Puységur, who disliked the convulsive crises which accompanied Mesmer's cures, discovered that patients could be put by 'magnetization' into a sleep-like or 'somnambulic' state in which cures were equally well effected. Patients in this state showed themselves unusually responsive to the commands of the mesmerist, and could be made not merely to perform actions suggested by him, but to feel prescribed emotions or entertain delusory beliefs. Ordinary faculties might be heightened, and novel faculties seemingly induced. For example, in the somnambulic state patients would often diagnose and prescribe for their own ailments, and sometimes would do the same for other people by means of alleged clairvoyance. Upon awakening, the patients commonly showed no recollection of what had passed.

Puységur's explanation of the phenomena which he observed was, at least to begin with, similar to Mesmer's. He was impressed by the fact that 'magnetized' objects could send subjects into the 'magnetic sleep', and thought in terms of an effluence capable of being collected and stored. But he emphasized, as Mesmer did not, that the magnetic fluid or therapeutic energy might be directed by the will of the operator upon the body and nervous system of the subject. A receptive subject might be swayed by the operator's changing wishes and commands, as a magnetic needle is influenced by variations in the magnetic flux playing upon it.



Caricature of 'animal magnetism', the influence through which Mesmer believed he achieved his startling cures

Puységur's ideas were, in many ways, more influential than those of Mesmer. Mesmer became increasingly a background figure after about 1785. Thus it was the 'somnambulic' state, often with accompanying 'clairvoyant' diagnoses, and not the baquet and the crisis, which figured most prominently in the rapid spread of the mesmeric movement. By the time of the French Revolution there were mesmeric societies throughout France, and in Germany serious studies were being undertaken by reputable physicians. The Revolutionary Wars interrupted progress, but it was resumed in the early 19th century, and there was hardly a country on the continent of Europe where some interest in the subject was not shown. By the end of the 1820s most of the phenomena subsequently thought characteristic of hypnosis had been observed, and the first painless surgical operation on a patient in 'trance' had been performed. In the 1830s and 1840s, partly through the activities of travelling demonstrators, the movement spread more extensively to Great Britain and the United States.

In Britain the hostility of orthodox medicine was extreme, and the leading mesmerist, John Elliotson (1791-1868), was forced to resign his teaching position at a London hospital. In the United States orthodoxy was less entrenched, and for a while mesmerism had a significant influence.

The Hypnotic Movement

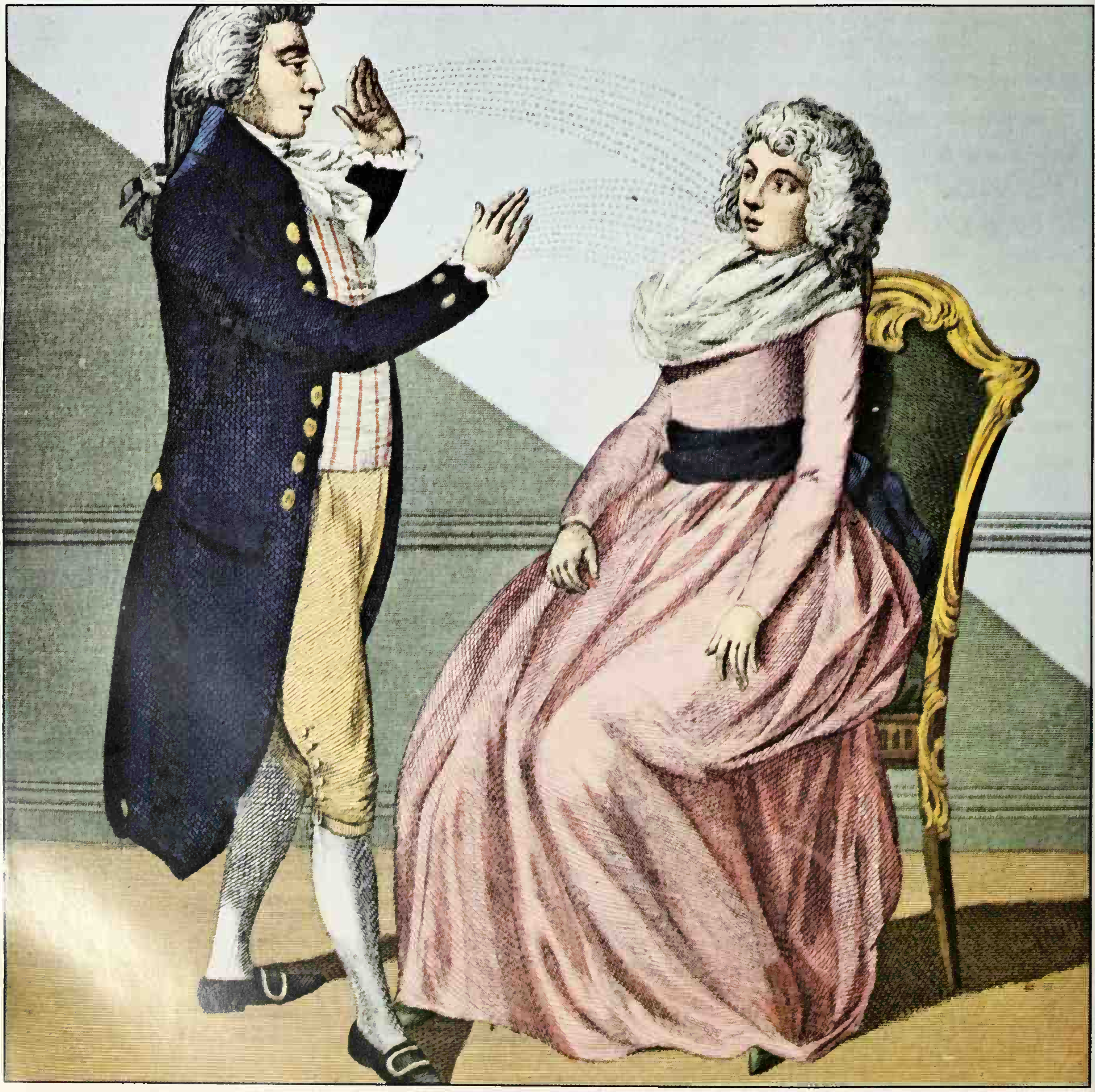
In most countries the great majority of interested persons at this period could be divided into two camps, those who believed in the phenomena and accepted some version or other of the fluidic theory, and those who thought that all the phenomena could be attributed to fraud by the operators and shamming by the subjects. Of those who adopted a different position, the most noteworthy was perhaps a Manchester surgeon, James Braid (1795-1860), the author of *Neurypnology* (1843). After watching some public demonstrations of mesmerism, Braid concluded that the most effective way of producing the 'nervous sleep' (or state of 'hypnotism' as he termed it, from *hypnos*, the Greek for sleep) was visual fixation by the subject of a small bright object held close to and somewhat above the eyes. He distinguished two stages of this nervous sleep, a stage of cataleptic plasticity, in which the limbs retain postures imposed upon them, and a stage of rigidity accompanied by anaesthesia, in which, however, any limb or organ may be returned to activity and sensibility by blowing on it or stroking it. He rejected all notions of a 'mesmeric fluid' and attributed these phenomena to changes in cerebral and spinal circulation brought about by straining the attention, suppressing the respiration and stressing the eye-muscles. The therapeutic effects he set down to secondary changes in circulation consequent upon changes in muscle tone. Later, he came to think in terms of concentration of the subject's mind upon 'a fixed dominant idea' suggested by the operator ('monoideism').

Braid achieved a degree of respect from orthodox medicine in Britain, and after his death his ideas had for some years a vogue among French medical men (the 'braidists'). However, the person who first firmly established hypnotic phenomena as a legitimate area of scientific study was the celebrated French neurologist, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), of the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, who may indeed have been partly influenced by the braidists. From studying female hysterics in the Salpêtrière, Charcot distinguished, in the period 1878-1882, between what he called *petit hypnotisme* (in which hypnotic phenomena were not fully developed) and *grand hypnotisme*, which he regarded as a nervous disorder allied to hysteria. *Grand hypnotisme* had three stages, namely the stage of catalepsy, the stage of lethargy, and the stage of somnambulism, each of which could be induced by specific kinds of physical stimulation.

Charcot's reputation lent credibility to these ideas, but during the 1880s they came under strong and successful attack from Hippolyte Bernheim, professor of medicine at Nancy, and his colleagues. The 'Nancy School' maintained that the stages and phenomena of *grand hypnotisme* were only to be found in individuals to whom they had been antecedently suggested. In fact all these phenomena, and others supposed to be characteristic of the hypnotic and mesmeric states, could be obtained in perfectly normal persons by repetitive verbal suggestions. Hypnotic sleep differs from ordinary sleep principally in that, during it, the subject's mind retains some contact with the hypnotizer, who is able to influence brain activity by implanting ideas. These will 'take' with especial readiness because normal critical and rational thought is in abeyance. Phenomena producible in this way, either immediately or at some subsequent time specified by the hypnotist ('post-hypnotic suggestion'), might include sensory hallucinations; anaesthesia sufficient for serious operations; the performance of complicated or ridiculous actions; impersonation with outstanding dramatic flair of some character named by the hypnotist; the acceptance of totally delusory beliefs; remembering of events not normally accessible to recall; the stopping of bad habits, such as smoking; the cure or alleviation of neurotic or obsessional ideas or symptoms; the improvement of skin complaints, such as eczema and warts; or the production of blisters and other marks on the surface of the skin.

This general view of hypnotic phenomena gained wide currency as the hypnotic movement spread during the closing decades of the 19th century, and for a while 'psychotherapy' and 'hypnotherapy' were almost synonyms. There were, however, some partial dissenters, such as Pierre Janet (1859-1947), who continued to hold that hypnosis is the artificial elicitation of a state of hysterical somnambulism (that is, a state in which some dissociated and usually painful group of ideas displaces the normal stream of consciousness) in persons antecedently liable to it. It is far from clear that Janet and the Nancy School were talking about the same phenomenon.

In the early years of the 20th century, hypnotherapy was largely, though not totally, displaced as a psychotherapeutic technique by psychoanalysis and kindred systems. The period between the wars and



Mesmerist and patient: the mesmeric movement spread rapidly, and by 1830 most of the phenomena now thought characteristic of hypnosis had been observed

Mary Evans Picture Library

after the second World War saw a gradual revival, accompanied by increasing interest in hypnosis as a subject for experiment in the psychological laboratory. In recent decades many of the assertions and assumptions of earlier workers, and of the 19th-century pioneers, have been challenged.

Thus, claims as to the benefits of hypnotherapy have been radically reassessed. The claims of the pioneers were largely based upon studies of individual cases. The patients improved, but did hypnotherapy help them improve, or would they have recovered anyway, and was recovery correlated with susceptibility to hypnosis? These questions can only be answered by comparing the progress of patients treated by hypnosis, and susceptible to it, with the progress of matched groups of unhypnotized patients. Such trials are not easy to set up, and findings so far have by no means fully confirmed the claims of the more optimistic hypnotists, though it seems that hypnotic treatment may be useful in, for example, certain sorts of psychosomatic disorder.

Particularly subject to criticism has been the notion that there is a peculiar sleep-like hypnotic (or 'trance') state in which subjects become specially amenable to suggestion, and may indeed exhibit abilities which they do not ordinarily possess. No generally agreed objective markers of such a 'special state' (such as a specific EEG pattern) have so far come to light. Opponents point out that many so-called 'hypnotic' phenomena can under the right circumstances be equally readily obtained with unhypnotized individuals; while, as to some of the more exotic phenomena (such as hypnotic hallucinations or blistering), they are prone to be dismissive – not always, it has to be said, with complete justification. Many of the issues hinge upon questions of experimental method, and it is to be noted that clinical hypnotists, who often work with mentally abnormal subjects, are more apt to believe in a 'special state' than experimentalists.

With the collapse or weakening of the special state hypothesis, theoretical approaches to the problems of hypnosis have become increasingly numerous and confusing. A 'neo-dissociationist' position is upheld by Ernest Hilgard and his supporters, who maintain that the phenomena are to be understood in terms of the partially autonomous functioning of different hierarchically organized 'cognitive control systems' in the brain. The 'socio-cognitive' school of Nicholas Spanos and his followers presents the 'hypnotized' subject as someone utilizing 'cognitive strategies' to enact the social role of 'good hypnotic subject'. Other theorists emphasize the subject's 'response expectancies', personal traits or 'capacity for imaginative involvement'. Many theorists present not so much a theory of hypnosis as a multi-pronged approach to the problems of hypnosis, and some have come to hold that there is more than one possible route to being a 'good' hypnotic subject.

Attempts have often been made to use hypnotic phenomena, and the supposed state of hypnosis, to throw light on various kinds of religious phenomena. For instance, the ecstasies into which profoundly religious persons have sometimes fallen, as a result of intensive meditation and prayer, may be characterized by insensitivity to pain, hallucinations, muscular spasms, and the induction of organic changes such as stigmata, for all of which hypnosis can provide analogies (see ECSTASY; STIGMATA). In some cultures, monotonous ritual drumming, dancing and chanting seem to be used to produce rather similar effects (see DANCE), and these techniques have been compared to the repetitive stimulation used to induce a state of 'hypnosis'. The 'trances' entered by mediums and shamans in many cultures have frequently been regarded as a form of self-induced hypnosis (see MEDIUMS; SHAMAN), as has the extravagant behaviour of persons caught up in epidemics of 'possession' (see POSSESSION). The influence of revivalist preachers on their congregations has often been likened to that of hypnotic demonstrators on their audiences (see ENTHUSIASM). Interesting though these speculations are, no decision about them can be reached until there is agreement as to how hypnosis itself is to be viewed and as to whether there is anything that can be usefully equated with the 'state' of hypnosis.

The Mind-Cure Cults

Somewhat different problems arise in connection with mesmerism and religious phenomena. Although mesmeric phenomena are nowadays generally supposed to be at root the same as hypnotic phenomena, it is possible that the mesmeric techniques, involving as they often did touching and stimulating the surface of the patient's body, may have had direct physiological effects not producible by hypnotic techniques. The similarities with traditional religious healing by 'laying on of hands' are obvious (see FAITH HEALING).

Mesmerism itself has been the source of two religious movements, or rather groups of religious movements. The first is constituted by the various 'mind-cure' cults, especially Christian Science, the second by the various branches of modern Spiritualism (see CHRISTIAN SCIENCE; SPIRITUALISM). The link between the mesmeric movement and Christian Science was the American mesmerist and healer P.P. Quimby (1802-1866) of Maine. About 1838, Quimby became interested in mesmerism, and found that he was himself a capable operator. In a youth named Lucius Burkmar he discovered an excellent somnambulic subject, who could diagnose and prescribe in trance, and for some years they gave public demonstrations. Later Quimby found that he himself had the gift, not only of clairvoyant diagnosis, but of directly apprehending the contents of a patient's mind. As a result he came to see that the physical ailments from which the patients suffered were a direct consequence of the erroneous ideas which they entertained. In order to cure their illnesses it was necessary to correct their erroneous ways of thought. These doctrines Quimby called 'The Science of Health' or sometimes 'Christian Science'.

Quimby's most famous patient was Mary Patterson, later Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science (see EDDY), who was without doubt indebted to him for some of her leading ideas.

The link between mesmerism and modern Spiritualism is more complex, but not less strong. Quite early in the development of the mesmeric movement stories were heard of mesmerized persons exhibiting clairvoyance and other paranormal powers (see CLAIRVOYANCE). Certain gifted clairvoyants were apparently able to perceive distant scenes without the use of the ordinary senses, and in the wake of the Romantic Movement it was not long before this peculiar sensitivity was turned from scenes in this world to scenes in the next. German somnambules were especially prone to such visions, and their admiring mesmerizers often noted down and published their revelations in minute detail. The most remarkable case was perhaps that of Friedericke Hauffe, the 'Seeress of Prevorst', whose physician, the poet Justinus Kerner, published a book about her in 1829. In the somnambulic state Frau Hauffe saw, and held conversations with, the spirits of deceased persons, some of whom apparently provided her with verifiable information about their earthly careers.

In France Alphonse Cahagnet published *Arcanes de la Vie Future Devoilés*, records of the accounts which various mesmeric somnambules gave of their contacts with deceased relatives of persons present at the seances; a similar work, Dr J. Haddock's *Somnolism and Psycheism*, was published in England in 1849. Both Cahagnet and Haddock were interested in the teachings of Swedenborg, which were in many ways not unlike those of modern Spiritualism, and the revelations of their subjects reveal a pronouncedly Swedenborgian cast (see SWEDENBORG). Both Cahagnet's and Haddock's subjects showed remarkable instances of apparent clairvoyance. Also tinged with Swedenborgianism were the doctrines of the American seer, Andrew Jackson Davis, whose *Principles of Nature* was published in 1847 and quickly became famous.

Thus, when the modern Spiritualist movement started its career in 1848, its likely public had had time to become accustomed to the idea that certain persons might, when in an unusual psychological state, be able to make contact with the spirits of the departed, and bring back information about the next world. The 'mediumistic trance' evolved out of the 'mesmeric trance', and the doctrine of a mesmeric fluid directed by the operator into the subject's body, so as to control its actions, was soon extended to include 'control' exercised by the spirits. The mesmeric movement in every way set the stage for the Spiritualist movement, and was to some considerable extent absorbed by it.

ALAN GAULD

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MESOPOTAMIA

The Sumerians initiated a cultural revolution which gave the world writing, cities, and a corpus of religious practices and concepts

The Sumerians and their successors in Mesopotamia developed both a complex pantheon of deities and a complex system of demonology and magic

IN THE ANCIENT WORLD religion was not a distinct or optional activity but the attitude to life which gave it cohesion, meaning and pattern. Mesopotamian religion, like Hinduism, had its roots in prehistory and was not attributed to a specific founder. Despite the three thousand years over which the evidence extends, and the several distinct groups of peoples concerned, there is a sufficient continuum to justify treatment of the whole of the evidence as belonging to one cultural stream, and to speak of Mesopotamian 'religion' rather than 'religions'. Some distinction can be seen between the systematized theology of the scribes, which provides the bulk of the evidence, and the popular religion, but since evidence of the popular religion appears only incidentally and allusively, little specific can be said of it.

Mesopotamia here means the pre-Christian cultural area approximating geographically to the modern state of Iraq. In the context of ancient times the southern part of this region is known as Babylonia, the northern as Assyria.

The earliest evidence of the occupation of southernmost Mesopotamia comes from c 5000 BC. By 3500 BC this region was settled by the Sumerians. This ethnic group, of unknown origin, initiated a cultural revolution which gave the world writing, cities, and a corpus of religious practices and concepts. From their original area of settlement in southern Babylonia, where their city states flourished during the third millennium, Sumerian cultural influence permeated as far north as the area later known as Assyria, but was less marked there than in the south.

The period 2750 to 2500 BC saw considerable immigration into Babylonia of peoples from the Arabian desert, speaking the Semitic language Akkadian, who in the course of their assimilation to the higher Sumerian culture profoundly modified it, not least in religion. Further Semitic immigration brought about, by c 2000 BC, the disappearance of the Sumerians as an ethnic or cultural entity, and in the north overlaid the aboriginal inhabitants of Assyria with a mainly Semitic culture.

The beginning of the second millennium was marked by the rise of a number of Akkadian-speaking city states, of which Babylon under Hammurabi ultimately achieved supremacy. Before 1000 BC political supremacy had passed to Assyria, which with brief intermissions remained predominant until shortly before the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC.

The Sumerians and their successors employed as their principal writing material tablets of clay, inscribed by impression with a stylus. Such tablets, virtually indestructible, have been found in hundreds of thousands. Many of them contain texts directly or indirectly related to religion, myth or magic, one of the principal sources being libraries collected by Assyrian kings, particularly Ashurbanipal (668–629 BC) at Nineveh.

Ancient man saw the universe in the form of conscious forces, which were conceived of in some specific shape. Such personification was originally not necessarily in human shape, since some of the most primitive concepts of divine powers invested them with animal aspects. Some aspects of the forces active in the world, certainly those thought of as universal gods, must have been personified by the Sumerians before their settlement in Mesopotamia. In addition, each early Sumerian settlement had its own local deity (sometimes identified with a universal deity), with attributed characteristics depending on the dominant features of the locality and community. As society developed, the deities of different settlements were brought into relationship, whilst additionally specific aspects of agriculture and technology (for example, corn or brickmaking) became personified in a deity. Thus arose a considerable pantheon, the names of its members being compiled in god lists before the middle of the third millennium. Genealogies of the gods (theogonies) were developed to explain the relationship between deities.

The Great Gods

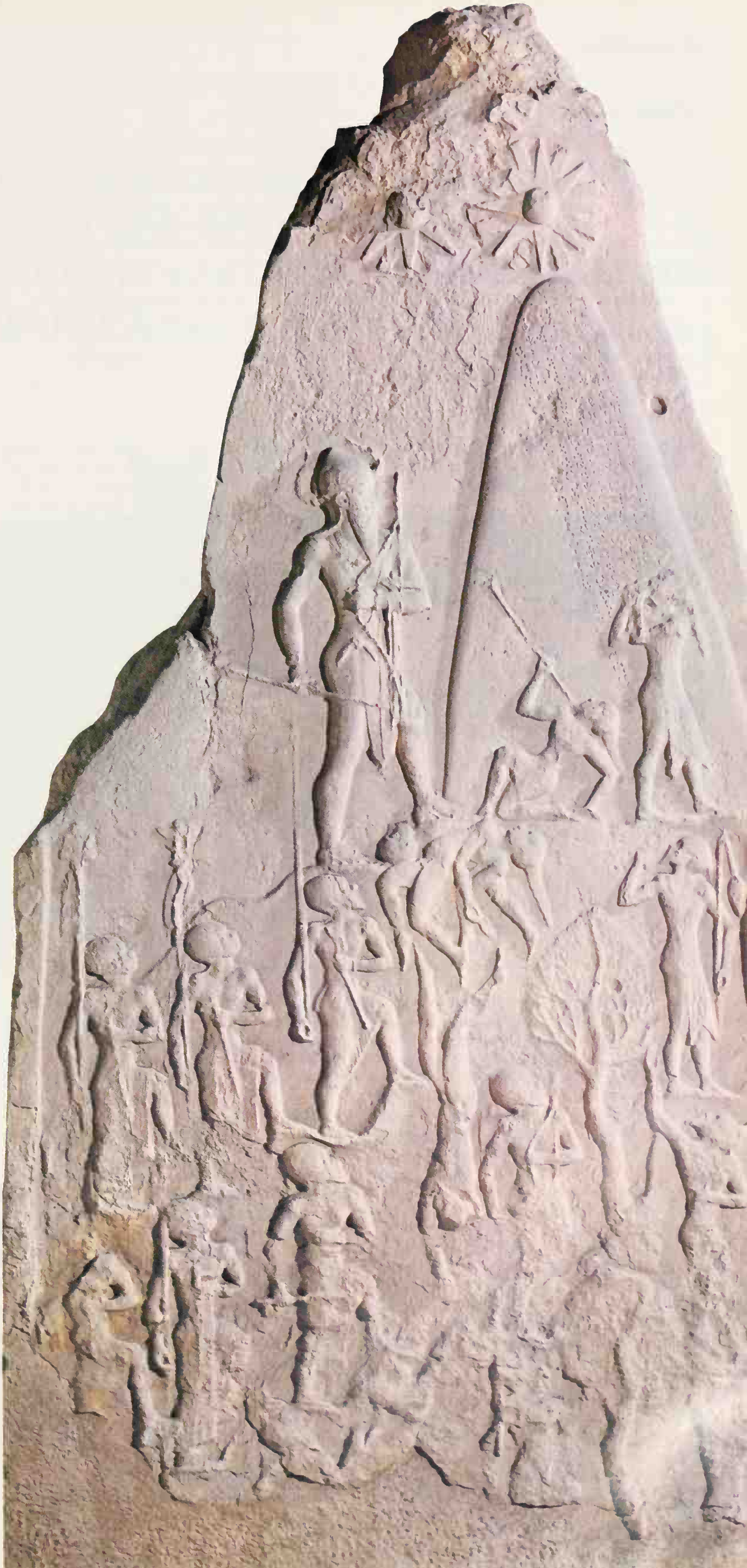
In one group of theogonies Enlil is the first god, deriving from several generations of vaguely defined primeval beings. In other theogonies, this role falls to An (Akkadian Anum), with Enki (Akkadian Ea) as his son. These two concepts were theologically combined, so that heading the pantheon in its

The stele of Naram-Sin, c 2300 BC, shows the Akkadian king facing a stylized mountain, his foot resting upon the bodies of his enemies; behind him soldiers climb a mountain path. The gradual infiltration of Babylonia by Semites in the 3rd millennium BC led to modification of the ancient Sumerian religion

developed form there stood a triad of universal gods: Anum, the sky god and king of the gods; Enlil, 'Lord Wind', originally a wind and mountain god; and Enki (Ea), god of wisdom, originally 'Lord Earth'. Though Anum was nominally king of the gods, executive power was in the hands of Enlil, who often in practice usurped the supremacy. In the mythology of historical times the sphere of Ea's activity was the cosmic sweet waters (Apsu) beneath the earth, probably as a result of the Sumerian Enki absorbing the attributes of a divinity of an earlier stage of religion.

A second group of deities comprised the moon god Nannar (Sin); the sun god Utu (Shamash); Venus, known in Sumerian as Innin or Inanna, 'Lady of Heaven', and in Akkadian as Ishtar; and the weather god, who was of less importance in a purely Sumerian context than to the Semites, amongst whom he was called Adad. These four gods, manifestly related to the diurnal period, are specifically described as sleeping during part of the day. Since in the latitude of Babylonia the crescent of the new moon is seen on a level axis like a boat, Sin was said to ride across the sky in a holy ship. Though, like the other great gods, thought of also anthropomorphically, he bore the epithet 'Brilliant Young Bull', and in a myth took that form to impregnate a cow.

The sun god rode across the heavens in a chariot drawn by mules. It was to him that prayers were addressed by those who lived by the ancient pre-agricultural pursuits of hunting and fishing, although all civilized



Giraudon

Praise to Ishtar

From an Akkadian hymn to Ishtar, translated by Ferris J. Stephens

She is clothed with pleasure and love.
She is laden with vitality, charm,
and voluptuousness.
Ishtar is clothed with pleasure and love.
She is laden with vitality, charm,
and voluptuousness.

In lips she is sweet; life is in her mouth.
At her appearance rejoicing becomes full.
She is glorious; veils are thrown over her head.
Her figure is beautiful; her eyes are brilliant.

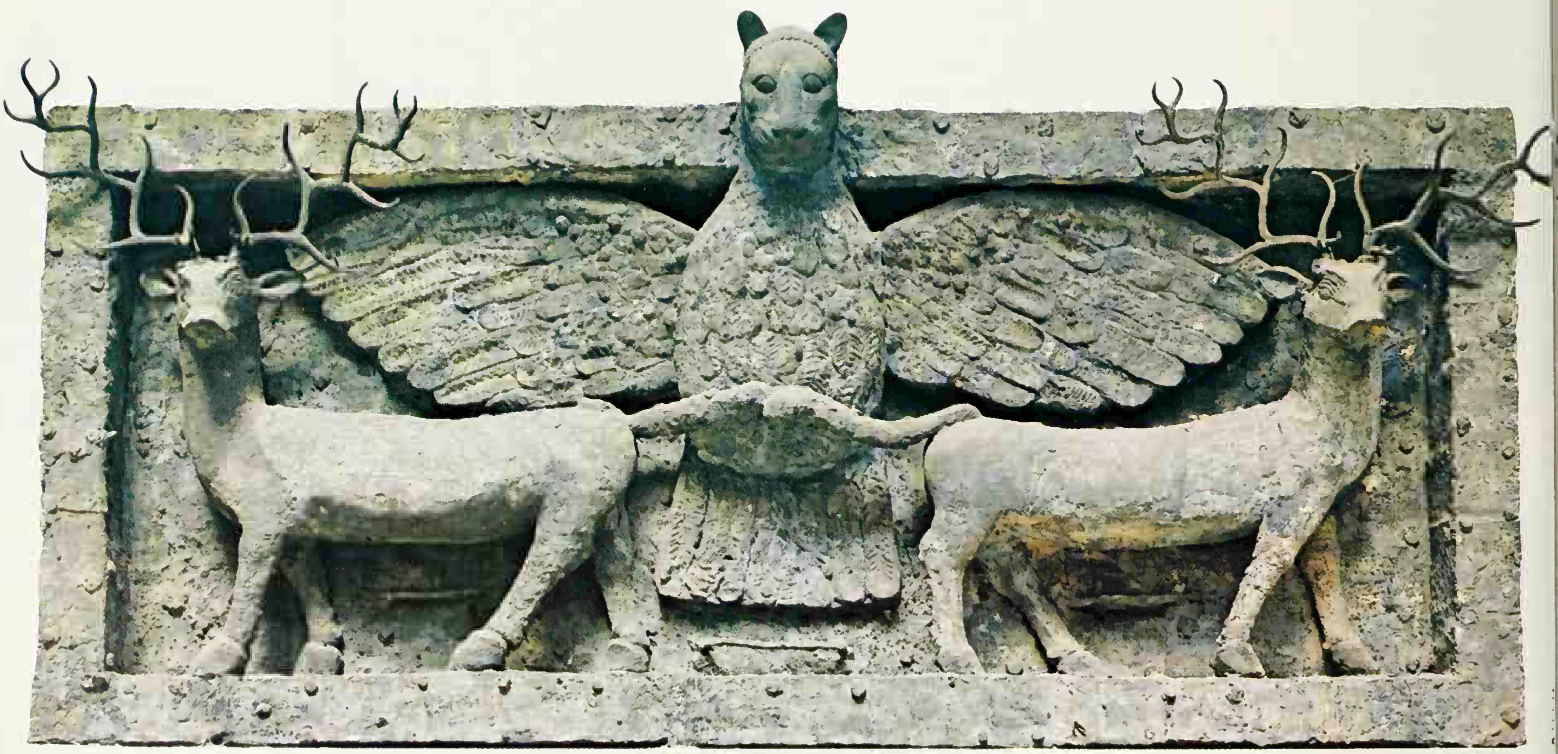
The goddess – with her there is counsel.
The fate of everything she holds in her hand.
At her glance there is created joy,
Power, magnificence, the protecting deity and
guardian spirit.

She dwells in, she pays heed to compassion and
friendliness.
Besides, agreeableness she truly possesses.
Be it slave, unattached girl, or mother, she
preserves (her).
One calls on her; among women one names her name.

Who – to her greatness who can be equal?
Strong, exalted, splendid are her decrees.
Ishtar – to her greatness who can be equal?
Strong, exalted, splendid are her decrees.

She is sought after among the gods;
extraordinary is her station.
Respected is her word; it is *supreme* over them.
Ishtar among the gods, extraordinary is her station.
Respected is her word; it is *supreme* over them.

James B. Pritchard ed. *The Ancient Near East*



Imdugud, the sacred lion-headed eagle, spreads his wings protectively over two stags. This large copper relief probably ornamented the entrance to a Sumerian temple

men bowed to him at his rising. Seeing all that happened on earth, he became god of justice and the divine lawgiver, and also controlled omens. He was sometimes thought to pass through the underworld at night.

The importance of Adad, the weather god, increased as one left Babylonia, a region watered almost wholly by irrigation, and moved north-westwards into areas dependent upon rain. Because of the sound of his voice in thunder, Adad was associated with the bull: he was also represented by the lightning symbol.

Inanna-Ishtar, a very complex figure, Queen of Heaven and Earth, the only prominent goddess of historical times, seems to have personified the vital forces of the crises of life. She could be felt as the loving mother who had suckled the king, or as the goddess controlling sexual powers, or as goddess of battle. She was also associated in myth and popular religion with a consort Dumuzi (Tammuz), a fertility deity who was annually lamented when absent in the underworld (see ISHTAR; TAMMUZ).

Other deities of major significance included Marduk, originally an aspect of the sun god. As god of Babylon, he ultimately achieved supremacy in the Babylonian pantheon, assimilating the characteristics of Enlil; he was also equated with a god Asallukhi, in which context he was god of magic (see MARDUK). Nabu, god of Borsippa, the nearest city to Babylon, was (probably for this geographical reason) regarded as Marduk's son; he was also patron of the scribal profession. The latter function had earlier been attributed to a Sumerian goddess Nisaba, and the conflict between the two concepts was resolved by Nisaba being (by the first millennium) regarded as Nabu's wife. In Assyria it was Ashur, originally the Assyrian tribal god, who ultimately usurped leadership in the pantheon, bearing the title 'the Assyrian Enlil'. Another god who became of particular significance in Assyria was the warrior god Ninurta, son of Enlil.

Though there are indications in mythology that a number of female deities originally held a significant place in Sumerian religion, from the beginning of the second millennium the only goddess of independent significance other than Inanna (Ishtar) was Ereshkigal, Queen of the Underworld, and even in her case a myth describes how she gained a dominant spouse, Nergal. Each of the male deities had a nominal consort, sometimes a pale reflection bearing the feminine form of his own name, sometimes an old Sumerian goddess who originally served an independent function in the pantheon or even existed before the developed pantheon.

The great gods, whilst regarded as being concerned with the life of Babylonia and Assyria as a whole, might at the same time be thought of as having their abode particularly in a certain city or cities. Anum lived in Erech or Der, for instance, and Shamash in Sippar or Larsa. The deities were in no sense tied to these places but if the proper rites were performed, an aspect of the deity might take up residence in an image, which then represented the god's presence and became a focus of the cult, although the god was not theologically thought of as bounded by the visible statue. A considerable

The deities, in the form of statues, might make journeys from one shrine to another; their accidental movements on such occasions were of great significance as omens

wardrobe of clothing, insignia and jewellery would be available to dress and adorn the god's image. Daily food offerings were made, and privileged persons, including the king, might be permitted to eat the food remaining from the god's meal table. The deities, in the form of the statues, might upon appropriate occasions make journeys from one shrine to another, either by ship or upon the shoulders of bearers. Their accidental movements on such occasions were of great significance as omens to bystanders.

There is some ambiguity about the relationship felt to exist between Mesopotamian man and the great gods. On the one hand, the great gods were concerned not with the individual but with the maintenance of cosmic and political order and the course of Nature. On the other hand, there are indications that the relationship between a worshipper and a god might be felt as a very intimate one. In the third millennium Gudea, a city ruler, says to his god: 'You are my father, you are my mother.'

In general, the gulf between the worshipper and the great gods was bridged by the concept of the 'personal god', a minor deity rather like a guardian angel, who could bring the supplication of the ordinary man before the major deities. It seems probable that only a king would have a major deity as his personal god.

Defeated Gods

Behind the deities prominent in historical times there are traces of an earlier stage of religion, hinted at in the genealogies of the gods, and represented in myths and incantations which mention divine beings thought of as slain, defeated or suppressed. Whilst the deities of historical times are primarily anthropomorphic, some of the divine powers of the earlier stage were conceived in animal form. Anzu (or Zu), a divine being who once challenged the great gods, had the form of a bird, whilst Tiamat, the primeval being from whom in one myth the gods originated, was sometimes represented as a dragon, and another proto-deity whose attributes were absorbed by Ea may have been thought of as an ibex. The supersession of the earlier stage of religion is reflected not only in the various combat myths, but also in the fact that the victor gods bear the characteristics, and sometimes the names or titles, of those they overcome. Thus Ea not only overcame Apsu, the primeval waters, but bore the title 'the Ibex of the Apsu' and is even identified with Apsu. Ninurta not only defeated Anzu, but had applied to him the name Imdugud, elsewhere used of Anzu. Marduk not only subdued Tiamat's marshal Kingu, but could actually be called Kingu.

The number of deities in the pantheon was ultimately much reduced by identifying one deity with another or with aspects of another. For example, one hymn specifically states that a number of great deities are incorporated in the god Ninurta. Such a process would logically have concluded in monotheism. The claim has been made that this was actually achieved in Babylonia, but this remains questionable.

Like a Thrusting Bull

Myths, either as long literary productions or embedded in fragmentary form in incantations, ritual texts or hymns, are known in both Sumerian and Akkadian. The value of myths for the understanding of Mesopotamian religion has been variously estimated, one extreme view being that they primarily reflect primitive stories from the remote past rather than anything in the religious experience of Mesopotamian man of the second or first millennium. Against this, whilst their origin was certainly (in most instances) very ancient, their use until a late period in incantations indicates that they were still felt to have some relevance to the supernatural forces affecting mankind.

The main themes of myths concern (with variations between Sumerian and Akkadian examples) the creation and organization of the physical universe, the creation of the gods and their functions, the creation of man, the origin and prehistory of the existing order, the origin of disease and healing, and stories of the Flood and the underworld.

A Sumerian myth of creation offers an insight into the concept of the relationship between the gods and mankind. The composition begins with an account of the difficulties confronting the gods in obtaining their food. Their complaint is brought before Enki, god of wisdom, who describes to his mother how to make servants by moulding clay in the image of the gods. Theologically, this reflects the view that mankind exists primarily to serve the gods. When the creation of man has been successfully achieved, Enki and his mother, having become intoxicated in celebration, proceed to make seven abnormal beings, this part of the story being an attempt to explain the occurrence of malformed humans.

The myth of 'Enki and the World Order' described how Enki produced the features of the world as known to the Sumerians. He it was who had given cattle to the nomad 'who builds no city, who builds no house', and he it was who had decreed for the various lands their characteristic products, and who had instituted the various aspects of agriculture. A typical passage described how in the manner of a bull he impregnated the Tigris, giving it fertility, and making its water available for irrigation.

> Like a thrusting bull he stood proudly,
> He produced an erection, he ejaculated,
> He filled the Tigris with clear water . . .
> The water he produced is clear water . . .
> The grain he produced . . . the people eat it.

Some Sumerian myths reflect very early cultural advances or changes. The earliest Sumerian settlements were in the extreme south around Eridu, but the cultural centre subsequently moved north to Erech; this situation is reflected in the following myth. Inanna, goddess of Erech, visited Eridu, whose patron Enki, god of wisdom, had in his charge a collection of objects basic to civilization, called in Sumerian *me*, and representing features of civilization which in modern terms would mainly be thought of as abstract concepts, but which the Sumerians, conceiving them as embodied in their symbols, could regard as physical entities. They included such aspects of Sumerian life as kingship and royal insignia, various priestly offices, sexual relations and prostitution, musical instruments, truth and falsehood, various crafts, peace and victory. A feast ensued at which Enki, generous in his wine, made these functions over to Inanna. Subsequently repenting of his generosity, Enki dispatched monsters to intercept Inanna on her voyage home, but failed in his attempt.

One of the most striking myths, centred on Inanna (Ishtar) and extant, with variations, in both Sumerian and Akkadian versions, describes the visit of the goddess to the underworld, for reasons which are not made explicit but which some scholars have suggested (on little evidence) was to gain possession from her older sister Ereshkigal. Inanna's descent took her through seven

By 1000 BC political supremacy had shifted from Babylonia to Assyria and northern gods, such as the warlike Ashur, consequently achieved greater prominence: relief from the palace of the Assyrian king Sennacherib, showing a pile of heads of defeated enemies

gates, at each of which the gatekeeper removed part of her garments and insignia. Emerging through the final gate naked, she encountered the deathly glance of Ereshkigal and the judges of the underworld, and became a corpse.

Anticipating disaster, Inanna had left her vizier, Ninshubur, with instructions to seek help from various other deities, if she did not return within three days. After unsuccessfully visiting Enlil in Nippur, and the moon god in Ur, Ninshubur went to Enki in Eridu. Enki created two sexless creatures (possibly a reflection of the occurrence of eunuchs in the cult of Inanna) and sent them to Ereshkigal, from whom after they had ingratiated themselves, they were to beg the corpse of Inanna as a gift. The creatures then restored Inanna to life, but the rules of the underworld permitted her to leave only if she provided a substitute. Her return to the earth was therefore in the company of ghouls, serving as wardens. At the first two cities Inanna visited, she found the city god in mourning for her, and in gratification exempted them from being taken as substitute. At the third town, a suburb of her own city Erech, she found the god Dumuzi, her own spouse, rejoicing instead of lamenting. In chagrin she handed him over to the representatives of the underworld who, despite desperate attempts by Dumuzi to escape, finally took him prisoner, to Inanna's ultimate grief.

Amongst myths preserved only or primarily in Akkadian the best known is the relatively sophisticated Creation myth *Enuma elish* ('When above'). Recited at Babylon during the New Year festival, this began with a description of the origin of the universal deities Anum and Ea from a chain of beings descended from the primeval Tiamat and Apsu, the cosmic ocean and sweet waters. Eventually the bustling activities of the younger gods disturbed the primeval beings, and conflict ensued. After Ea had overcome Apsu, Tiamat herself entered into hostilities.

The other gods proving powerless to challenge her, Ea's virile son Marduk appeared as champion on condition that he should receive supreme power in the pantheon. With this granted, he fought and defeated Tiamat, splitting her body like a shellfish, and spreading it out as heaven and earth. From the blood of Kingu, leader of

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the host of Tiamat, Marduk created man, and imposed on him the service of the gods. In gratitude to Marduk the other gods built him a shrine in Babylon.

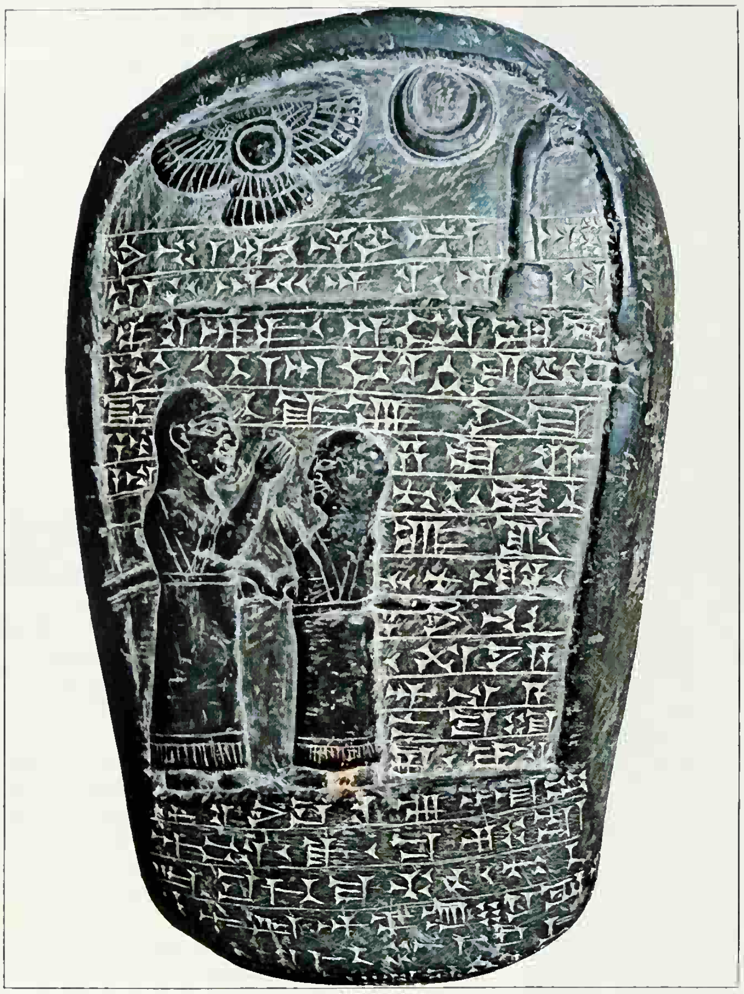
This myth reflects theological ideas concerning the origin of man (created to serve the gods but yet containing a divine element), and also concerning the reason for the political supremacy of Babylon.

The myth of 'Adapa', the ending of which is missing, concerns the limitations of human beings in the face of the gods. A fisherman, Adapa, was summoned to heaven for breaking the wing of the south wind. After Anum had forgiven him, he had immortality within his grasp when the supreme god offered him the bread and water of life but – falsely advised by Ea – Adapa rejected these gifts.

In the relatively late myth of the pestilence god Erra, datable in origin to the end of the second millennium, Erra is represented as offended by mankind's neglect of his cult. He therefore came to Marduk, god of Babylon, to pick a quarrel. By this period Marduk had acquired attributes originally belonging to Anum, and was called 'king of the gods'. For reasons which are not clear, Marduk had to leave his city to go to the underworld, and conciliated Erra by allowing him to take charge during his absence. Breaking trust, Erra proceeded to devastate Babylonia, including the capital itself. Finally Erra's anger was calmed by his vizier, and he confessed himself at fault. This may represent a mythological explanation of an outbreak of plague in Babylon, possibly during the New Year festival, when on the human level the city was dangerously crowded, and on the mythic level Marduk was, for part of the period, absent. The epilogue states that the presence of this myth in a house will give protection against plague, and it is known that extracts from this myth served as amulets.

The Prowling Dogs

The great gods were probably of less immediate concern to the ordinary man than the demonic powers with which his imagination peopled the world. Spirits were of many kinds, including both ghosts of humans who had come to a violent or tragic end – 'a man lying dead in the open country, uncovered with earth', 'a weeping nursing mother' – and non-human devils, amongst others the



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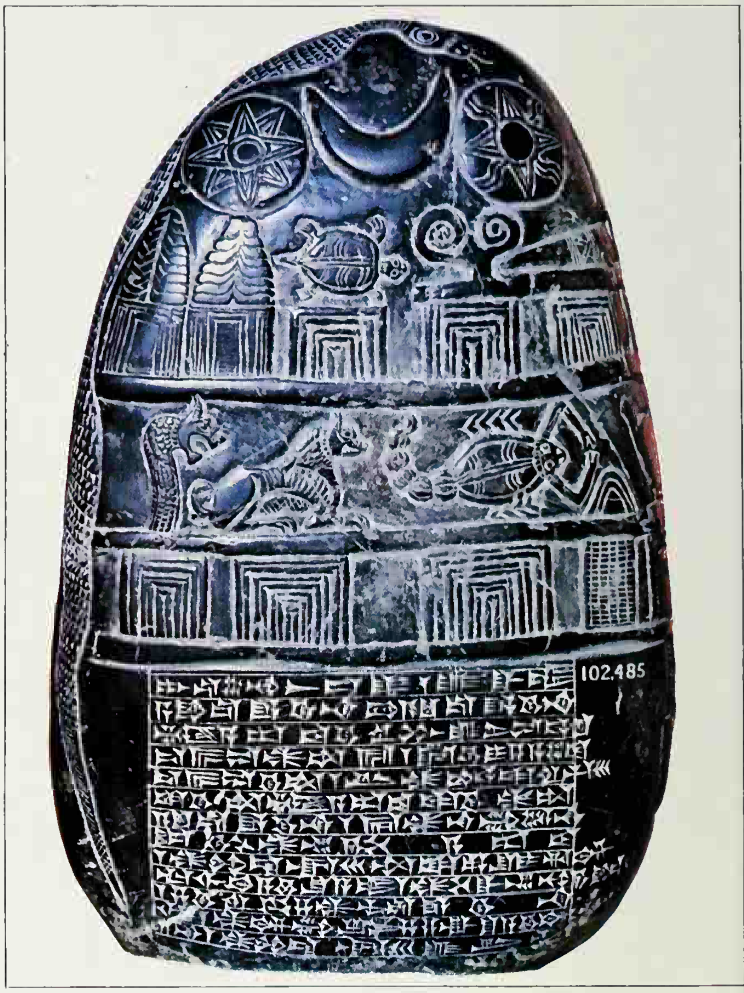


'Croucher', the 'Seizer', the 'Ghoul', Lilith and Lamashtu, a female spirit which preyed upon women in childbirth and upon infants. Such spirits lurked in corners, in graveyards and in the desert. They were likened to prowling dogs, and their motion could be so rapid that they were said to flit past like shooting stars. They could get into houses by many means:

> A door cannot exclude them,
> A bolt cannot turn them back;
> They slither through the door like a snake,
> They blow in by the hinge like the wind;
> They bear off the wife from a man's embrace,
> They snatch the son from a man's knee.

A vast corpus of magical incantations and rituals grew up to deal with them, some collected into series which developed a standard form. Amongst these the principal are *Utukku limnutu*, 'Evil Spirits', and *Asakku limnutu*, 'Evil Disease-demons'. Typically these contain incantations and ritual instructions represented as derived from Enki (Ea) and his son Marduk, god of magic. These were used by the exorcist, who spoke in the name of Enki:

> I am the man of Enki! . . .
> The great Lord Enki (Ea) has sent me;
> He has put his pure spell to my spell;
> He has put his pure mouth to my mouth;
> He has put his pure spittle to my spittle;
> He has put his pure prayer to my prayer . . .
> By the magic of the word of Enki (Ea),
> Those evil ones will be taken away.

Some of the incantations in these series contain fragments of ancient myths. Others were strictly limited to a ritual and an incantation. For example: 'If dead men keep appearing, it is "Hand of Ishtar". To drive the dead men away, you shall mix vinegar with river water, well water, *mundu* water (uncertain meaning) and ditch water. You shall fill an ox horn, and you shall raise the horn in your right hand and a torch in your left hand and say thus: "My (personal) god, turn to me! My (personal) goddess, look on me! Let your angry hearts be calm; let your ire be appeased; set forth well-being for me."'

Magic, which in the hands of the exorcist could protect Mesopotamian man from the attack of demons, in the hands of sorcerers (male or female) could be directed against humans. Such anti-social use of magic is widely attested from the beginning of the second millennium, being legislated against by the Laws of Hammurabi. The typical technique in witchcraft was making an image of the victim which was then destroyed, often by burning, but anything closely connected with the intended victim could be used to gain magical power over him.

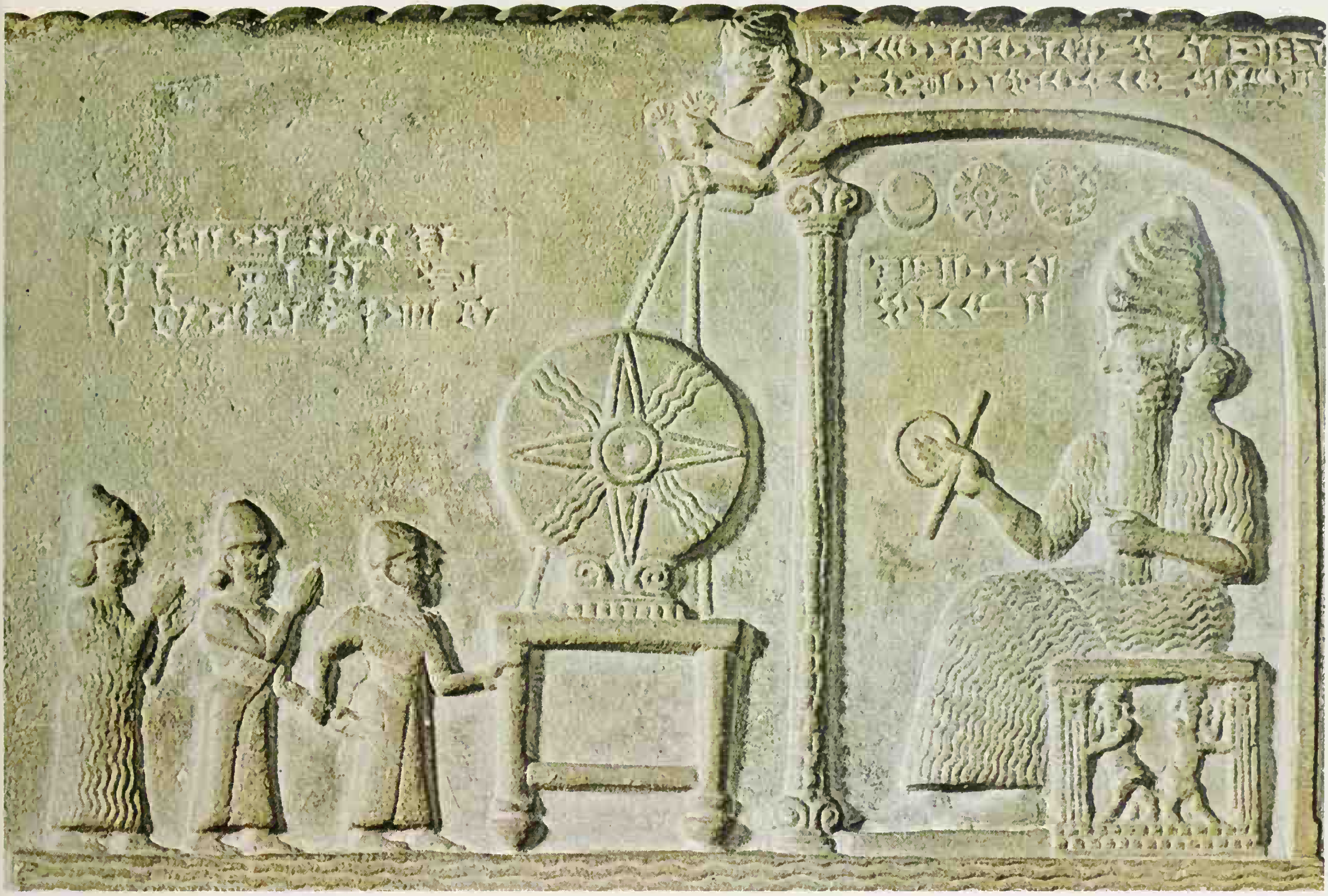
Evil persons might also make use of the magical properties of spittle. When one spat, the decent thing to do was to rub it out with the foot, but a worker of black magic might deliberately omit this, in order to gain power over the person walking over it. Sorcerers themselves could be counter-attacked by magical means. Thus we find a cylinder-seal employed against a witch. The seal was twirled to the accompaniment of a suitable incantation – 'O witch, like the twirling of this seal (of green stone), may your face spin and turn green' – whereupon the witch was herself 'put into a spin'. The principal incantations and rituals against witches and sorcerers were collected in a series known as *Maqlu* ('Burnings'), so called because the typical rituals involved burning images of the sorcerer or witch or related demonic powers, to the accompaniment of an incantation to the fire god.

Left Commemorative stele set up in honour of Adad-etir by his son: father and son stand below the symbols of the gods Shamash, Sin and Nergal _Centre_ A boundary stone recording a gift of land in southern Babylonia also bears symbols of the gods, invoked to protect the deed _Right_ The sun god Shamash receives homage from three smaller figures; the sun god's emblem, the solar disc, appears on the altar. The tablet was dedicated by a Babylonian king of the 9th century who restored the temple of Shamash in Sippar, a city thought of as a main abode of the sun god

Extraction of Curses

Not only the deliberate activities of witches and sorcerers but also the commission, even accidentally and unwittingly, of certain tabooed acts, could bring evil supernatural influences upon a man. Curses (not necessarily spoken words) were regarded as physical things which could enter a man's body and by suitable means could be extracted again.

Troubles of this kind were dealt with by another series of incantations, called *Shurpu* (a term also meaning 'Burnings', but in a



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The patient was handed an onion, a date, a piece of matting, and tufts of wool: each of these he had to pull apart and throw into the fire

different sense from *Maqlu*). The victim was diagnosed as suffering from one of an undifferentiated list of offences, including both deeds which would in terms of modern thought be taken as ethical offences and those which were simply accidental breaches of a taboo. Thus the sufferer might have:

> Eaten what is taboo to his god,
> Estranged son from father, father from son,
> Despised his parents, offended the elder
> sister,
> Said 'There is' when there was not,
> Had intercourse with his neighbour's wife,
> Shed his neighbour's blood,
> Slept in the bed of a person under a curse.
> Drunk from the cup of a person under a curse.

The remedy for all these was of the same kind. Incantations were recited by the exorcist and the patient was then handed an onion, a date, a piece of matting, and tufts of wool. Each of these he had to pull apart and throw into the fire. Accompanying the destruction of each was an incantation of the following type: 'Like this onion which he peels and throws into the fire . . . so may oath, curse . . . pain, weariness, guilt, sin, wickedness, transgression, the pain which is in my body, my flesh, my sinews, be peeled off like this onion.'

Another procedure used to dispose of evil influences was to absorb them into some substance or animal. The following simple example describes the method of calming a feverish child by transferring the evil contagion to a dog: 'You shall place a loaf on the child's head; you shall recite a (previously specified) incantation three times; you shall wipe (with the loaf) from the (child's) head to his feet, you shall throw that loaf to a dog. That child will be calm.'

The threat of evil powers, in the form of demons, witchcraft, and other forces released by breach of taboo, came to a climax in relation to the king himself. Many rituals and incantations and a vast corpus of taboo were designed to protect him, and the land whose wellbeing resided in him, from such perils. He might even resign his throne temporarily to a substitute to escape the dire consequences when particularly grave evils were foretold (see KING).

The gods were thought to determine in advance the details of a man's life, or

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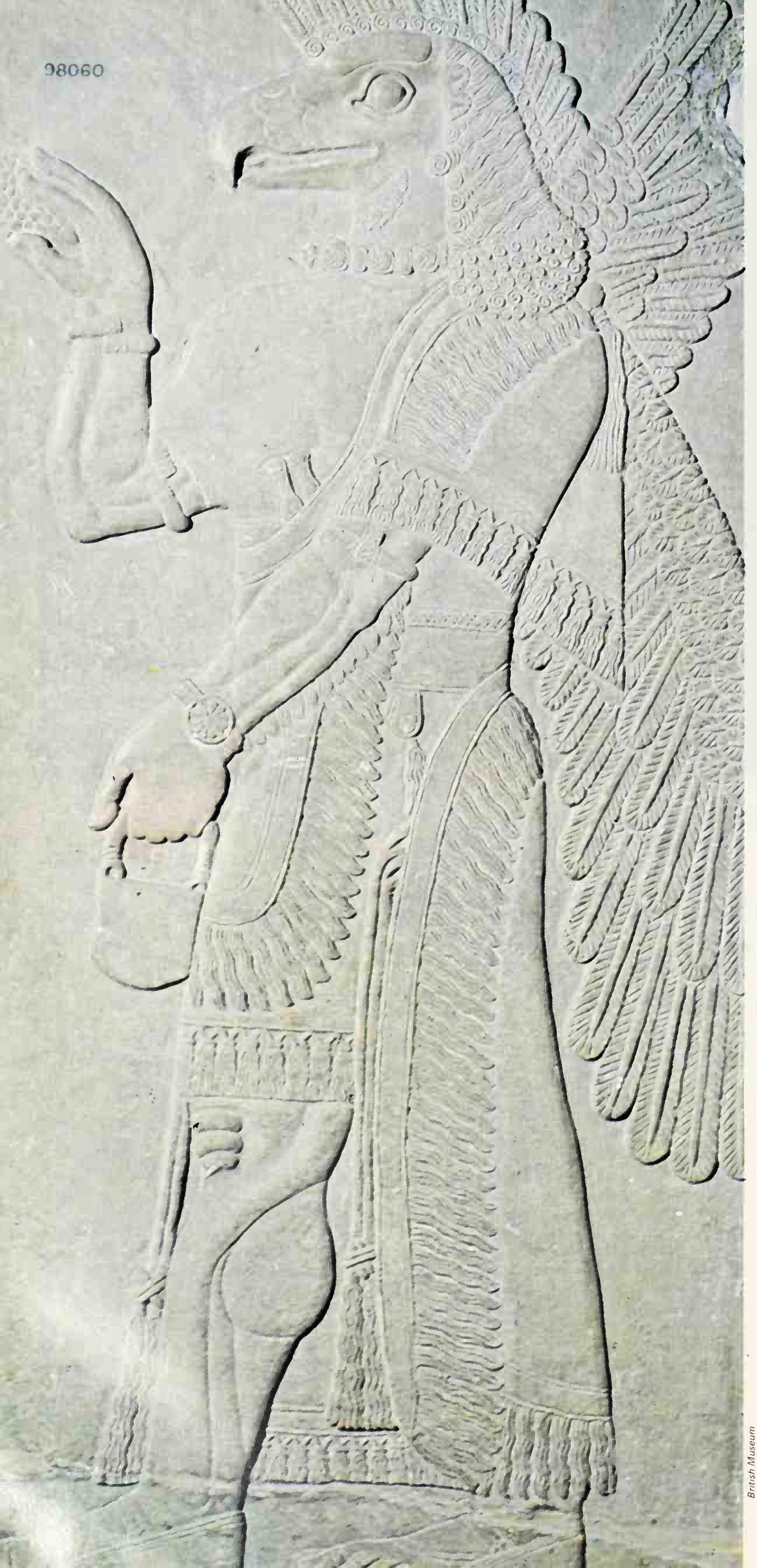

The practical affairs of the Mesopotamians were thought to be controlled by minor deities: these were of two kinds – benevolent guardian spirits and evil demons. One of the former, a winged eagle-headed genie bearing offerings, appears on this alabaster bas-relief of the 9th century from the palace of Assurnasirpal

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events relating to the future of a city or nation. By using proper means, men could obtain a glimpse of these 'destinies'. Many forms of divination developed to this end, some available to the common man, others restricted to the king and matters of statecraft. Amongst the principal techniques were exstispicy, observation of animal behaviour, interpretation of dreams, and astrology.

Exstispicy involved the slaughtering of a lamb and the examination of its internal organs. A question having been previously put to the sun god, his answer could be read by the experts in the configurations and markings of the organs, particularly the lungs and liver.

Omens could be obtained in simpler manner from random events, in particular the behaviour of animals, and there arose large compilations listing these. If ants were seen fighting, this foretold 'approach of the enemy; there will be the downfall of a great army.' If a white dog cocked its leg against a man, hard times would follow, though if it were a brown dog, the man would receive happiness.

For the interpretation of dreams, to which much importance was attached in later Assyria, a 'Dream Book' existed, giving the interpretation of some hundreds of dream incidents. Astrology, also important in imperial Assyria, used meteorological or celestial phenomena to predict matters relating to the king or the state. For example: 'During the night Saturn came near the moon. Saturn is the "star" of the sun. This is the solution: it is favourable to the king, (because) the sun is the king's star.' This divination technique was used many centuries before the development of horoscopic astrology, applicable to a particular individual, which, although it also had its origin in Mesopotamian civilization, did not arise until the latest stage, at about 400 BC.

(See also CREATION MYTHS; FLOOD; GILGAMESH; MAN.)

H. W. F. SAGGS

FURTHER READING: S.N. Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago Univ. Press, 1971); A.L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia, Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago Univ. Press, 2nd rev. ed., 1977); R. Thompson, comp., *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, 2 vols. (AMS Press, 1976, c1903-4); G. Van Driel, *Cult of Assur* (Humanities).

Douglas Allen

The Abode of Love, at Spraxton near Bridgwater, was the headquarters of two self-styled messiahs, Henry James Prince and John Hugh Smyth-Pigott: after Prince's death in 1899, Smyth-Pigott inherited both title and position

Many men have claimed to be, or have been hailed as, divine saviours: messianic movements of the modern world include the Dutch Loumensen, the Abode of Love in England, the followers of Father Divine in the United States, the Nazareth Baptist Church in South Africa, and the Ras Tafarians in Jamaica

MESSIANIC MOVEMENTS

THE DISTINCTION between a messiah, or saviour, and a prophet who foretells doom and offers ways of escaping it, is not always easy to draw, but in the strict sense the term 'messianic' is confined to movements whose leader claims to be God or a representation of God, or which arise in firm anticipation of such a god-man's appearance. The term is often used loosely for religious movements which expect the end of the world and the establishment (usually for believers only) of a new dispensation of peace, plenty and pleasure. These are more accurately called millennial movements but some movements, of course, are both messianic and millennialist, when the messiah's role is to lead the faithful into the millennium. Early Christianity, and all movements expecting the Second Coming of Christ (see SECOND COMING), can properly be called messianic but current usage tends to restrict the term to groups whose messianic beliefs are outside the Bible.

Claimants to messiahship were common in Jewish history before Christ, and were by no means uncommon in the Middle Ages among Jews, Christians and Moslems. In modern times, the messianic figures who have commanded the greatest following have appeared in non-Christian countries or among underdeveloped peoples. An example is Hung Hsui-chuan, the son of a Chinese peasant household who emerged as a visionary, after repeatedly failing the Civil Service examinations, and inspired the Taiping rebellion which began in southern China in 1851 and lasted until 1864, with Nanking as its capital for most of this period.

Younger Brother of Christ

Hsui-chuan had been influenced by an American missionary and the content of his visions was in many respects Christian, but he became convinced that his destiny was to restore the true faith to China, and that this would be achieved only with the overthrow of the Manchu imperial dynasty. Thereafter Ta'i-p'ing t'ien kuo, the heavenly kingdom of great peace, would be established. The name *ta'i-p'ing* had been used to describe an era of peace in the Chinese past, but the rest of the title was coined to express the Christian concept of a heavenly kingdom. Hung Hsiu-chuan did not make outright claim to be God, but rather to be the younger brother of Jesus; however, some scholars believe that he produced, in place of a trinitarian system, a fourfold concept of the deity. His followers were seen as a Chinese version of the children of Israel seeking the Promised Land.

As the movement grew and drew around it more conventional rebellious elements, Hung Hsiu-chuan's role was overshadowed by more militant and political leaders. He had been the early focus of attention for many who were discontented in southern China, where the peasantry had been reduced to the status of tenants, where population growth had produced new pressure on arable land and where, in Hunan province in particular, famines and catastrophes had been frequent. Hung Hsiu-chuan's ideas were alien to Chinese thought, and this has been seen as a factor which may have limited the support that he commanded. His message combined the unreconciled elements of Christian eschatology, promising both a new kingdom on earth with resurrection of the dead, as well as the prospect of salvation in the otherworld. He is reputed to have dwelt very much on sin and to have made men anxious about its consequences, demanding regular prayer for forgiveness, and obedience to the Ten Commandments. In the early days of his activity some of his followers had ecstatic and convulsive experiences. In spite of the unfamiliarity of these things, the new ideology mobilized an effective following who rose in armed rebellion on an impressive scale, until the movement suffered defeat largely through the agency of General Gordon.

Gordon's role in life seemed destined to be that of opponent of messianic claimants, for he is linked more intimately in the public mind with the struggle against another modern messiah – Mohammed Ahmad, the Mahdi who inflamed the Sudan in the 1880s. Despite the rigorous monotheism of Moslems, messianism has played a powerful role in Islam.

Ahmad proclaimed himself the Imam, successor of the Apostle of God, the expected saviour, the chosen one who would reconquer the Moslem world and restore the community that Mohammed the prophet had brought into being. He took the title Mahdi, the 'guided one', although, since the Sudan was of the Sunnite division of Islam, he did not claim to be the Hidden Imam, long awaited by Shiite Moslems. Ahmad was widely accepted, and his personal piety and high reputation made plausible his claim to be the Mahdi. He quickly built up a new state which was a theocratic despotism, the success of which lasted for more than a decade after his own death in 1885, even though there were strong tensions between the different groups among his followers. (See also MAHDI.)

Miracle Worker or Personal Saviour

No other messianic figure of the last century can equal the Mahdi in terms of worldly success, but there have been many men who have claimed to be God both in underdeveloped countries, where they have been more successful, and among more advanced peoples. In modern society, where rational bureaucratic systems regulate life, and where there is heavy reliance on technical skills and well-defined roles, claims to superhuman competence are far less credible than in the more personal world of simpler societies.

Miracles are not believed in by people who are used to explanations of a scientific and strictly causal kind, and successful modern religious figures, in America and Europe, tend increasingly to claim to be 'scientific' rather than to be workers of miracles that defy the laws of Nature. Where technology is less advanced, where principles of organization are less understood and, above all, where abstract concepts and empirical inquiry are less developed, the messianic claimant can still gain a hearing among those who dream of personal saviours who will solve men's problems.

But messiahs have arisen from time to time in advanced countries, not only among underprivileged ethnic groups, in culturally retarded areas or among severely isolated and unworldly groups, but among much less easily identified groups of the population including well-to-do and educated members of society.

'Why Shouldn't God Smoke?'

One of the most colourful of these was Lou, born Louwrens van Voorthuizen in north Holland, who spent the middle years of his life as a fisherman. Lou, as he preferred to be called, declared himself to be God in 1950, and drew around him a small and somewhat contentious body of followers, *Lou-mensen*, who were united essentially by their complete devotion to him. Lou maintained that his role was the equivalent of that of Christ, but whereas Christ had won a spiritual victory over the Devil, he, Lou, would defeat the Devil in the body.

Lou rejected conventional moral obligations, as having no relevance for salvation. (He made much of his liking for cigars: 'Why shouldn't God smoke?' he asked.) Salvation was to be attained only through him. His followers were to regard themselves as the sons and daughters of God, and needed no wills of their own. They should surrender themselves gratefully to Lou, God.

The Bible was entirely superseded now that God was on earth again incarnate and, in the pamphlets which some of his middle-aged women votaries sold on the streets of Amsterdam, Lou derided both the Bible and the clergy who preached it. He preached that the time of the end was at hand, when all his followers would triumph over death. Despite the claim to immortality, Lou died in 1968. For a time his followers continued as a group, but recent inquiries at their address have not been answered.

A figure about whom even less is generally known is Georges Roux, the Christ of Montfavet, near Avignon in France. Roux was a postmaster who had practised as a faith healer for some time when, in the early 1950s, he announced that he was Christ. To read his works in simplicity of heart, it was claimed, was to accept his mission as the reappearing Christ. Roux's small following, whose churches took the name *L'Eglise chrétienne universelle*, was found mainly in Paris and the south of France.

The Abode of Love

The 19th century produced the most spectacular recent claimants to messiahship in Britain. Among these were two men, one of whom 'inherited' this claim from the other. Such a transfer of a status as unique as that of messiah must be unprecedented (short of a belief in the transmigration of souls) and yet the group known as Agapemonites, created in the 1840s by an Anglican priest, Henry James Prince, accepted, after his death, a new immortal messiah in the person of John Hugh Smyth-Pigott.

Prince was renowned at St David's, Lampeter, where he had studied for the Anglican priesthood, as a particularly pious student, and soon after taking up his first curacy at Charlinch in Somerset he gained a reputation for powerful sermons and a strong personal magnetism, particularly for women. Believing himself to be possessed of the Holy Spirit, his sermons became increasingly heretical; after some time his relations with the Church of England became strained, and he opened his own chapel in Brighton.

With donations from his supporters, among whom were a number of wealthy women, he bought a large house and grounds, together with a farm, at Spraxton in Somerset, and there established his community, the Abode of Love. He had set forth his teachings in a number of tracts, and styled himself 'the Beloved One' and 'the Messiah'.

At Spraxton Prince assumed complete control of his followers, making it clear that his will was the will of God, which none

Keystone

Father Divine IS GOD

Keystone

Left **'Father Divine', formerly George Baker, had behind him a career of active evangelism before he accepted the title of God. He taught his many thousands of followers to accept his will as their supreme good: he himself could work all the miracles that they needed**
Above **Beneath a placard proclaiming him as God, Father Divine addresses a meeting in a Harlem Peace Mission or 'heaven'**

might question. Some of the women who joined the community bestowed all their property on Prince, and well-wishers in Brighton, Weymouth and elsewhere contributed to its support.

From the beginning a luxurious style of life was adopted, with emphasis on recreation (the chapel itself was furnished with a billiard table). Prince drove a carriage with footmen, and was later remembered as having travelled through the neighbouring town of Bridgwater, with his footman sounding a trumpet and announcing him as the messiah.

The most distinctive feature of the Agapemonite life was Prince's teaching of 'spiritual wivery'. Surrounded by 'sisters', he took a 'bride of the Lamb' from among his following, declaring that 'in name you see Christ in the flesh, in my flesh'. The successive sexual adventures of Prince, which were undertaken in the name of the highest spirituality, caused some of his followers to withdraw, but those who stayed at Spraxton, other than his own paramours, led chaste and upright lives. The teaching which allowed Prince to affirm that he was above sin, no matter what he did, was for the leader, not for the following.

Messianic Succession

Prince fathered several children, and also found himself involved in a number of lawsuits when some of his female adherents made attempts to recover their surrendered property. Although his sexual practices were exposed in these proceedings, and although Prince himself was unfrocked as an Anglican priest, the community continued; undoubtedly most of its members had implicit faith in their messiah. Prince preached that he and his followers were immortal and deaths within the community were explained as the consequence of lapses into sin. His own death, in 1899, might have been expected to see the collapse of the Agapemonites: instead it produced a new messianic claimant.

Shortly before his death, Prince had sponsored the building of a church in Clapton, London, known as the Church of the Ark of the Covenant. This development was all the more surprising, since in his later years the Agapemonites had done little in the way of evangelization. It is uncertain whether the founding of this church, at which sympathizers with the Spraxton community occasionally met, had any direct connection with the choice of Prince's successor, or whether Prince had any interest in the continuance of his sect after his death. But it was at this church that, in 1902, John Hugh Smyth-Pigott declared himself to be Prince's successor as the messiah.

Smyth-Pigott had been ordained an Anglican clergyman in 1882 and for a time had been curate at St Jude's Church, Mildmay Park, not far away from Clapton. In the period following Prince's death he was leading a mission in Dublin. By some means he came, or had come, into contact with the Agapemonites and, after his pronouncement at the Church of the Ark of the Covenant, was accepted by them as their new leader. Some among them came to believe that he had been specifically designated as such by Prince himself – improbable, in the nature of messianic claims, as that must seem.

At Spraxton, Smyth-Pigott quickly established himself over the community, and continued many of the features peculiar to Prince's regime. He retained the division into three classes: the lowest comprised those who were the domestic servants of the rest, and the highest were the most spiritual group from among whom he would choose his soul brides.

Young women were still recruited to the community, and in 1904 Smyth-Pigott brought in a 'chief soul bride', a Miss Ruth Preece. He had three children by Ruth. His wife, who had borne him no children, appears to have accepted the situation with equanimity, as indeed did most members of the community. The local Anglican bishop, however, eventually felt constrained to have the Spraxton messiah unfrocked. Producing illegitimate children, rather than the well-publicized claim to messiahship, was what finally caused the Bishop of Bath and Wells to have Smyth-Pigott's case brought before a Consistory Court. The messiah took other brides in later years, and Ruth was displaced, following an elaborate ceremony, for disobeying the messiah's will.

The numbers at Spraxton, sometimes reinforced by visitors from a Norwegian sister house which Smyth-Pigott frequently visited, steadily declined, and the messiah's death in 1927 reduced the numbers further. Without a leader the community slowly dwindled, until in the 1950s Sister Ruth also died, and within a short time the community disappeared (see also PRINCE).

Movements that arise around a self-styled messiah are, in the modern age, unlikely to be revolutionary movements in any militant sense. The legal monopoly of coercive force in the modern state virtually precludes the possibility of a messiah actively fulfilling the implications of his claims to supernatural and omniscient power. In effect, therefore, the messianic leader operates more as if he were simply a wonder-worker. His miracles tend to be small miracles, tokens of power rather than manifestations of power in anything like the dimensions in which it is claimed. The reputation for small miracles is often enough for the faithful, and on such miracles rested a great deal of the reputation of one of the best-known of modern messiahs.

Father Divine

Like many other claimants to messiahship, Father Divine had behind him a career of active religious evangelism before he accepted the title of God. As George Baker, he had been a missionary among Afro-Americans in various parts of the US, but in 1930, at Sayville on Long Island, New York, Baker took the suggestive title, Father Divine. It was one among a number of such names assumed by other revivalists ('Daddy Grace' was a contemporary rival of Baker's).

At Sayville he established the first of his Peace Missions, communities which became known as 'heavens' for those who lived in them. They were organized on co-operative lines, and to them were attached members who were non-resident but who joined the residents for religious services.

Father Divine conceived the idea of a well-organized social service for his adherents. He found jobs for the unemployed and cared for the poor and, since many of those who joined the sect were incapable of much organization on their own part, there was a very real sense in which Father Divine was their saviour, in this world at least, if not in the next.

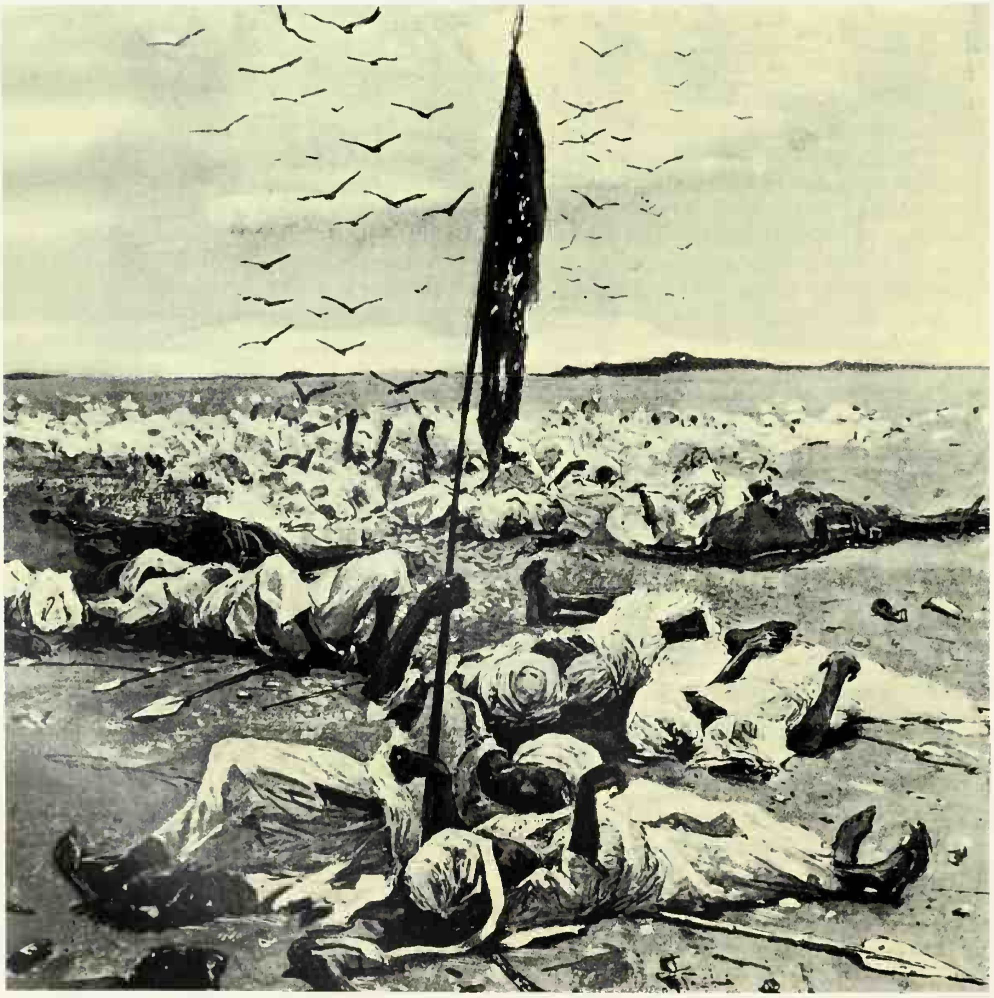
Like most messianic leaders, he had no developed eschatology: salvation was indeed here and now, since God was here and now. In common with other messiahs, he taught that his members should not and would not die: death was a shameful thing within the movement and not to be spoken about. Nor had Father Divine much use for the Bible, which was clearly a superseded book. Since God was available to speak for himself, the written record of his acts, long ago and for a remote people, was of little specific interest.

The Peace Mission espoused a rigorous ethical code and this may in itself have been part of its formula for success. Members were weaned away from those habits which caused debility and degeneracy among large sections of the population. Smoking and drinking were prohibited. Honesty was a strict requirement. Sexual continence, even between those who were married, was rigorously enjoined, and the ill consequences of a large progeny were in this way avoided.

Father Divine taught his followers to accept his will as their supreme good, and he forbade them to accept government welfare or to take out insurance policies. He himself could work all the miracles that they needed. He gave lavish banquets on a scale and in a style far beyond the previous experience of his adherents and, as they did not pay for these directly, his provision appeared as a miracle. He could pour innumerable cups of coffee from one small coffee pot, it was frequently affirmed of him. His followers believed that anyone who spoke or acted against him in any way would surely suffer, and took this as certain evidence of his divine power.

It is not easy to assess the numbers who believed in Father Divine when he was on the tide of success in the late 1930s, but there were perhaps hundreds of thousands, almost all Afro-Americans. After the Second World War the movement seemed to have passed its peak, as more militant forms of black religion, and in particular the Black Muslim movement (see BLACK MUSLIMS), displaced the essentially peaceful Father Divine cult. The movement may have suffered after Divine took a (white) second wife towards the end of his life, and because he was gradually less and less disposed to appear in public. He died in 1965, but the movement continued, although at a less impressive level than formerly.

The final defeat in 1898 of the followers of Mohammed Ahmad, the Mahdi: the theocratic state which he had established in the Sudan had lasted more than a decade after his death



Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

Black Christs

Much more propitious circumstances for claimants to deity exist in Africa than exist even among the least educated and poorest groups in advanced societies, and it is there that the most dramatic among modern messianic movements are to be found. Belief in a personal and visible God is much more acceptable to illiterate natives, lost between tribal and urban styles of life, than in any other community. Black Christs have emerged from time to time, most notably in the Congo, but in South Africa, too, there has been no shortage of claimants to the role. Two organizations still flourishing are the Zion Christian Church of Lengkanyane and the Nazareth Baptist Church of Shembe, each claiming a membership in the millions.

Edward Lengkanyane was one of the two sons of the original founder of the religious movement known as the Zion Christian Church. Although the brothers quarrelled after their father's death in 1949 or 1950, a large proportion of the movement was faithful to Edward. He established himself at the village of Zion City, Moria, in the northern Transvaal, where strangers were not welcome, and from there ran the movement, with churches as far away as Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Lekganyane's precise claims were difficult to discover, but his followers believed that he had power to prevent or create unemployment, to work miracles of healing and to destroy his enemies, and that he would soon have nations bowing down before him. His power was thought to destroy witchcraft, and in part he acted as the traditional witch-purger. But he was also the focus for an intense hatred of white men, and it may have been in the anticipated victory of Zion over the world that his messianic quality was most significant.

As with other similar African religious movements, a mixture of traditional and Christian ideas prevails in Zion City, together with some innovations of unknown origin. Followers must not take medicines, since that would be to accept rival claims to power. They are to abstain from alcohol and tobacco. They are forbidden to eat pork, a taboo which may derive from the Old Testament influence of the Protestant 'Zionist' sects which formed missions among South African natives at the end of the last century. Paper blessed by Lekganyane is burned as a way of liberating its potent virtue against witchcraft and illness.

The ceremonial adopted at Zion City was like that connected with an African chief, and part of the appeal of the movement may be its function as a substitute for tribal identity among peoples who have become detribalized. Since chiefs have little power, messianic claimants who behave like chiefs but who, from the point of view of the authorities, do not pose an overt political threat, are the most powerful native figures in South Africa, exercising authority in the one sphere in which Africans are permitted considerable freedom – religion.

Lekganyane combined the appeal of the traditional chief, presiding over ceremonies in which dancing, drumming and processions are all significant, with that of the modern tycoon, living in a modern house, dressing like an army officer and maintaining two Cadillacs and other cars.

The Nazareth Baptist Church is a not dissimilar organization, built up by John Galilee Shembe. He, too, was the son of the founder of the organization, and both father and son were deified by their Zulu followers. J.G. Shembe was a reluctant messiah, in some respects. A man who had a university education, he maintained active business interests in the name of his Church and was never wholly at home in the role which he had inherited.

Some of his followers saw him as the god of the blacks, just as Jesus was the god of the whites, and others regarded him as an incarnation of the Trinity. Shembe himself, however, tended to refer messianic claims to his father. The ethical and ritual code of the movement is, as with Lekganyane, based largely on Old Testament precepts: pork is tabooed; circumcision is practised. Before the great festivals of the sect's year, sexual abstinence is to be practised between spouses. Beards are worn by the men, and the women are forbidden to cut their hair. All medicine is to be avoided since illness is attributed to witchcraft, from which Shembe alone could rid his followers.

Healing is in many ways a central concern of the movement, but Shembe was an undramatic person and his 'laying on of hands' tended to be undertaken in a perfunctory fashion, while he attended to other business. He held mass healing sessions at which the Holy Ghost was enjoined to effect healing.

In many respects the Nazareth Baptist Church resuscitates the richness of Zulu tribal and ceremonial life. Shembe was often referred to as a chief, and had in the modern world more prestige than any of the actual Zulu chiefs, some among whom were worshippers in his Church. Ceremonies are extremely complex, and traditional dancing in elaborate costume is practised. Like a chief, Shembe received tribute from his followers, who are largely uneducated people. They have good reputations as workers and as orderly and law-abiding people. For them the movement provides community, offers possibilities of healing and fertility (a strong preoccupation among African women), and

John Hillelson C

Hung Hsui-chuan, whose visions inspired the Taiping rebellion which began in southern China in 1851; he preached the foundation of a heavenly kingdom and claimed to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ, though not God himself

Foto Anefo

Above **Louwrens van Voorthuizen declared himself to be God in 1950; the Bible was superseded, and salvation was to be attained only through him. In spite of his claim to immortality, the former fisherman died in 1968**

provides some type of security for individuals who feel endangered by life in the towns. It gives them a sense of belonging to a powerful deity who can protect them, and maintains strong links with the dignified tribal life of the past. A tract of land is maintained at which principal festivities are enacted and this serves, at least symbolically, as a type of tribal homeland for the Shembe-ites.

Lion of Judah

Not every messianic movement arises round a self-styled messiah. Some select as their divine saviour an individual who makes no such claims on his own behalf. One of the most remarkable modern examples is the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica, whose messiah was the former Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie.

A central theme of the movement is hatred of the whites who have dominated, first politically and still economically, the life of the West Indies. In Haile Selassie the 'Rastas' acclaimed a saviour who would bring black men into their rightful heritage – the ownership of the African continent – and who would help them to win black supremacy.

The movement had its origins after the First World War, in the strong impression made on many Jamaicans by the pronouncements of Marcus Garvey, a militant Jamaican who was active in the US. His attempts to establish Afro-Americans as a power in their own right included a prophecy that black people should 'look to Africa when a black king shall be crowned, for deliverance is near.' Not long afterwards, in 1930, Ras Tafari, as the Ethiopian crown prince was known, became Emperor, and many West Indians applied Garvey's words to him.

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 strengthened Rastafarian enthusiasm in Jamaica, for it seemed clear that an armed struggle of black men against white had begun. Christian ideas were now abandoned by supporters of Ras Tafari and the movement became a semipolitical religious belief in the power of a black saviour. Some extremists withdrew to the plantations, grew 'ganja' (marijuana) and established a colony of militant anti-whites, while there were leaders who traded on the bizarre fantasies of some of the followers, promising that planes would soon arrive to airlift them all to Africa and cynically turning a profit on the sale of worthless 'passports'.

An inquiry into the activities of the Rastafarians in the late 1950s led the newly-independent government of Jamaica (to which the Rastafarians were as opposed as to the whites) to permit a delegation to visit Africa. They visited Liberia, Nigeria and Ethiopia, and were received in Addis Ababa by Haile Selassie, who presented them with a token plot of land in his country. The Rastafarians were, however, disappointed in the possibility of migrating to Africa, and seem to have received no positive encouragement from any of the governments they visited. In 1956 Haile Selassie paid a state visit to Jamaica and, although he presented medals to some of his would-be subjects at a formal garden party, he made no mention of the possibility of satisfying their dream of settling in Ethiopia.

Haile Selassie's reign in Ethiopia ended in 1974, when he was overthrown by a military coup, and he died the following year. By this time the Rastafarian movement was strongly established in Jamaica and in Jamaican immigrant circles in Britain and North America. New cult heroes emerged, such as the musician Bob Marley, famous for his distinctive 'reggae' sound, who was a prominent and devoted Rastafarian, but died in 1981. (See also RASTAFARIANS.)

Cyanide at Jonestown

Between the 1960s and 1970s in the United States the short-lived Jesus People movement blended rock music and a hippie-style emphasis on love and 'letting it all hang out', with a fundamentalist belief in the Bible's literal truth and confident expectation of the imminent Second Coming of Christ. Since then, two dramatic episodes have brought other messianic cults to general public notice in the West.

The first occurred in 1978 in Guyana – the former colony of British Guiana on the north coast of South America – when hundreds of people were involved in an extraordinary case of murder and mass suicide. They were members of an American group, the People's Temple, founded in 1957 by a former Methodist minister from San Francisco, the Rev. Jim Jones, who claimed at various times to be a reincarnation of Jesus Christ, the Buddha and Lenin.

In 1974 he settled his followers, who were largely poor and black, in a commune named Jonestown, on 27,000 acres of land given by the Guyana government, some 150 miles inland from Georgetown, the capital of Guyana. He later considered moving the commune to the Soviet Union and made the study of Russian compulsory in Jonestown.

Reports soon began to circulate in San Francisco of savage beatings, torture and conditions of virtual slavery in the commune and, in November 1978, a Californian congressman, Leo Ryan, and a team of journalists flew to Jonestown to investigate matters for themselves. Ryan and three journalists were shot dead when they attempted to leave again by air with some members of the sect who had decided to quit the commune.

Jones then ordered more than 900 of his faithful followers to kill themselves and their children, an act which they had already rehearsed several times before. It was now carried out in deadly earnest. A large tub was filled with Kool-Aid fruit drink laced with cyanide. The adults and children were ordered to drink the poison, which was tipped down babies' throats. Anyone who refused to drink was forced to comply by armed guards or was injected with cyanide in the arm. It took them about five minutes to die. Jones told his people that this was not suicide, but 'a revolutionary act'. His own body was found with a bullet in the head among the corpses.

Another episode hit the headlines in 1993, when FBI agents and police set siege to the headquarters of the Branch Davidian sect near Waco, Texas, in a compound called Mount Carmel. Eventually, in April, the FBI stormed the complex, which caught fire, and some 70 members of the cult were killed. Among them was their leader, David Koresh, who called himself the Seventh Angel or the Lamb and claimed to be the Son of God, with a mission to bring the world to an end.

He had started life as Vernon Wayne Howell, 33 years before, in Houston, Texas, where he grew up as a Seventh Day Adventist, but broke away to join the obscure Branch Davidian cult in the 1970s. He recruited followers in Britain and Australia before taking over the Waco compound at gun point from the previous leader in 1987. He exercised total control over his followers' lives and had 15 or more 'wives' and innumerable children.

Despite occasional outbreaks of this kind, the militant and ecstatic type of movement may be a waning phenomenon. Social disorder seems likely to manifest itself in other forms as societies move into the technologically advanced modern world.

(See also BAHAIS; DIVINE PRINCIPLES; NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS.)

BRYAN WILSON*

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